



The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative:

Learning from the Past- Looking to the
Future

Final Report

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Section I

Impact on Personal Leadership and Ministry

“...because of my experience with DeVos, God’s just become so real. It’s almost like I’m in the Promised Land. I’ve never felt so much freedom in my whole life and a peace I can’t explain to people.” ~ Albuquerque

Chapter 1

Background and Research Methods

Introduction

The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative (DVULI) is a national faith-based leadership training program for adult urban youth leaders. Established in 1997, it is believed to be the longest running inter-faith urban youth leadership training program in the U.S. The primary purpose of this DeVos Family Foundations-sponsored program is to equip urban youth leaders with personal values and skills needed to enhance and sustain long-term training and involvement with urban youth, including collaboration with churches and other city-based youth education and development programs. Groups of participants (10-15 per city) complete a city cohort-based 15-month training program that includes two national conferences, five city conferences, bi-monthly group meetings, and individualized monthly leadership mentoring sessions. Almost 450 participants from 24 cities completed the training between 1997 - 2006. The leadership training curriculum, developed by a team of nationally recognized urban youth leaders, engages participants in deeper exploration of core values, training in practical leadership skills, and development of an individualized ministry action plan.

While many success stories have been shared with DVULI founders and staff, no formal evaluation of the program had ever been conducted. In July 2006, the DeVos Family Foundations asked both Andrews University and Calvin College to conduct an evaluation of the program. The primary purposes of this evaluation were to:

1. Validate the investment the DeVos Family Foundations has made in the development of urban youth leaders;
2. Begin to understand what components of DVULI were making the greatest impact on participants and communities in order to maximize their influence;
3. Describe DVULI's growth and change over time, including strengths, areas for future improvement, and lessons learned;
4. Work with DVULI leadership to document the rich personal stories of how DVULI had influenced the passion, skills, and personal and spiritual disciplines of youth leaders throughout the nation.

Brief Literature Review

While the short-term goal of this Initiative is to equip urban youth leaders with personal values and skills needed to enhance and sustain long-term training and involvement with urban youth, the longer term goal is to change the lives of urban youth through ministry, but also by changing the relationships and environment that promote high-risk behaviors among youth. At the risk of becoming too academic, this section will briefly review a few selected research studies that are related to this evaluation. This sort of review is important because it provides a background for understanding the importance of this evaluation's findings when compared to other studies that relate to changing urban environments. As we better understand the theories and research that explain how to reduce these behaviors, we are better able to shape DVULI curriculum and training activities to better meet the complex challenges of urban environments.

A variety of risky behaviors, including illegal drug use, early sexual activity, and violence are among the top causes of disease and early death among youth (Centers for Disease Control, 2006). In particular, children and youth in poor urban communities often experience persistent poverty, high rates of single parenthood, and excessive exposure to illegal and violent behaviors (Arthur, et al., 2002; Howell, 2003). However, research has repeatedly shown that children and youth who are connected to family, community, and faith-based institutions are less likely to engage in such risky behaviors (Kegler, et al., 2005; Kline, 2008; Stouthamer-Loeber, et al., 2004).

One of the avenues through which faith-based and community leaders and institutions can assist in reducing risky youth behaviors is through promotion of social capital, defined as the sum of "active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible" (Cohen and Prusak, 2001, p.4). Increased social capital has been associated with an increase in social and civic life (Putnam, 2000; Winter, 2002; The World Bank, 2003). Economic development and the overall well-being of a neighborhood have also been linked to the amount of social capital present (Caughy, O'Campo, & Muntaner, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Healy & Côté, 2001).

On the other hand, reduced levels of social capital have been linked to lower levels of physical and emotional health, depression and mortality within some communities (Kawachi & Berkman, 2003; Kawachi, 2001; Kawachi, 1999; Kawachi et al., 1997; Latkin & Curry, 2003). Kawachi et al. (1997) also suggest that social trust and group membership are associated with total mortality as well as death from coronary heart disease, malignant neoplasms, and infant mortality. Wilson (1991) suggests that diminishing social capital within a community may help to determine the prevalence of poverty.

Woolcock (2001) and Gilchrist (2004) further distinguish between *bonding*, *bridging*, and *linking* social capital. *Bonding* social capital takes place between similar people with strong shared commitments like family, friends, and other similarly connected groups. *Bridging* capital

refers to the overlapping interests of people who may have no obvious common bonds, such as members of a community, but who come together to conduct a protest, voice a concern, or take collective action. Bridging capital implies horizontal connections between people who share similar economic status and political power (Gilchrist, 2004; Larsen et al. 2004; & Middleton et al, 2005). *Linking* capital is “derived from the links between people or organizations beyond peer boundaries, cutting across status and similarity and enabling people to exert influence and reach resources outside their normal circles” (Gilchrist, 2004, p.6). It also can be seen as vertical connection between underprivileged individuals and people in positions of power in official organizations. As will be seen in the results of this evaluation, examples of all three forms of social capital are created through the Initiative’s training.

Within the faith-based context, many of the organizations involved in community building are using elements of bridging, bonding and linking social capital in their attempts to provide community service programs, reduce youth risky behaviors, develop peace and conflict resolution initiatives, and pursue social justice projects (Furbey et al., 2006). The United States and British governments have both developed an interest in understanding the relationship between social capital and the role of faith in community building, and their relevance to policy and practice. Such interest has increased as social capital is seen more and more “as contributing to better educational attainment, lower crime levels, improved health, more active citizenship, better functioning labor markets and higher economic growth (Furbey et al., 2006, p.1).

Faith communities are increasingly being seen as providing important access to bonding, bridging, and linking capital. However, Furbey and his colleagues note that it is important to consider that “the formation of bridging and linking social capital is strongly influenced by the numerical size of the faith communities; their diversity in ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious terms; and particularly their geographic concentration or dispersion (2006, p. 12).” Hernandez and his colleagues further point out that “one of the most important challenges facing the United States is dealing with the demands of an increasingly multicultural society (2003, p. 26.” Many ethnic and minority communities have deeply rooted religious commitments and lean heavily on faith communities for economic support, social activities, and even health information (VanderWaal, et al., 2001). Religion is also considered a very important factor in civic engagement. For example, Hernandez and his colleagues found that half of the volunteering capital found in Chicago Latino neighborhoods is provided through churches (Hernandez et al., 2007).

By training urban youth leaders in such Breakthrough Skills as Collaboration, Resource Networking, Systems Thinking and Asset Mapping, the DeVos Initiative is helping community leaders to connect youth with their families and communities (bonding capital), link community resources together to promote common goals (bridging capital), and network with individuals and organizations to bring in needed resources and programs (linking capital). However, in order to achieve a critical mass of social capital in urban communities that are able to have a sustainable and widespread influence, it is important for numerous faith-based organizations to

link together within communities and cities. The development of an extensive faith-based network within such communities is one of the primary goals of the Initiative.

Recent studies are beginning to explore the ways in which leaders within faith communities and other value-based civic institutions promote behaviors that can reduce risky behaviors as well as enhance hope, well-being, and educational attainment among youth. Similarly, policy literature points to the importance of providing sustained mentoring and healthy opportunities for young people by increasing adult support and supervision. This is particularly important in urban communities, where faith-based organizations provide a significant source of moral leadership and guidance for youth.

With this background in mind, this evaluation will explore the effectiveness of the Initiative in training urban youth leaders with personal values and concrete skills, in an ultimate attempt to reduce the risky behaviors among youth. Such an evaluation goes to the heart of answering Furbey and his associates' primary question: "How far can Faith organizations and their members contribute to social capital that not only bonds people together, but also enables them to cross boundaries and build bridges and links with others in civil society?" (2006, p.3). In this case, the question translates to – How well do leaders trained by the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative contribute to the development of social capital that not only bonds youth together, but also enables youth leaders and their faith communities to cross boundaries and build bridges and links with each other and with the society at large?

Description of Evaluation

Online Surveys

Researchers and DVULI staff decided to collect information directly from all DVULI graduates by asking them to complete an approximately 45-minute online survey. Reasons for including a quantitative survey in this evaluation were that:

- Many more questions could be developed with a higher level of specificity than could be provided in a qualitative, interview-based approach;
- The entire population of DVULI graduates with current contact information could be asked to participate in the survey, thus providing a broader representation of the entire spectrum of opinion;
- The analysis could be collected and analyzed more efficiently than a qualitative approach; and,
- The two approaches (focus groups/case studies and surveys) complemented each other by providing both depth and breadth to understanding the impact of DVULI on all who have been involved in the experience.

DVULI staff and researchers at Andrews University worked closely with Calvin College researchers to develop the survey in order to coordinate a complementary approach to

understanding the impact of DVULI training across its ten years of existence. Researchers at both Andrews University and Calvin College also obtained approval for the evaluation from their respective Institutional Review Boards.

Next, DVULI staff sent email and regular mail requests to all DVULI graduates, inviting them to participate in the evaluation and describing the benefit of the evaluation to future program participants. Online \$25 gift certificates for several restaurants or booksellers were included as incentives to graduates and to show them that their time involvement in completing the survey was valued. Graduates completed these surveys during late summer and early fall 2006.

Focus Groups

Researchers chose focus group interviews to understand the impact of DVULI on participants and their home communities. This approach allowed evaluators to document the rich personal stories and experiences that emerged over the past nine years of DVULI's existence. This approach is helpful to the staff and creators of DVULI to better understand the program's growth and change over that time, with a focus on program strengths, areas for growth, and lessons learned in the process. Focus groups are especially useful for exploring attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and decision making within a group setting. While such perceptions may be somewhat independent of a group or its social setting, they are more likely to be revealed and reinforced in a group setting where the give and take of group members allows for confirmation or contradiction of individual members' perceptions. This methodology was particularly appropriate for this evaluation because of its focus on the impact of the DVULI on participants' personal and ministry lives. As participants began talking about the impact of the program on their lives and ministries, other group members could more easily recall and build upon the discussion themes. The group interaction allowed participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to reconsider and re-evaluate their own understandings of their experiences.

Researchers worked with DVULI staff to select nine cities across the nation where the focus groups would be conducted. Cities included Denver, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Philadelphia, Houston, Albuquerque, Orlando, San Diego, and Indianapolis. DVULI staff and researchers chose these cities to get a wide variety of perspectives from early, middle and later graduates as well as include regional variation.

Researchers next developed an interview guide in conjunction with DVULI staff. Broad questions explored the impact of the DVULI training on the graduates' personal lives, ministry, and the communities that they served. The interview guide contained 17 questions regarding changes resulting from the Initiative across the following categories: 1) changes in knowledge and attitudes; 2) changes in values and beliefs; 3) changes in skills and behavior; 4) leadership paths; and, 5) DVULI and community relationships. Copies of the interview guide can be obtained from the Principal Investigator of this evaluation.

Case Studies

Researchers and DVULI staff decided to supplement their focus group interviews with ten case study interviews. Case studies are useful in developing a balanced story of a participant's experiences and results regarding a program. They are used to organize information about a case and then analyze the contents by seeking patterns and themes in the data, and by further analysis through comparison with other cases. The narrative is a highly readable story that summarizes and integrates key information around the focus of the case study. The narrative provides the eyes and ears for an outside reader to understand what happened regarding that individual. For example, the case study might include key demographic and vocational information about the participant, growth phases through which the participant passed, any major differences noticed about that participant during the process, or early indicators of challenges, all illustrated with key quotes from the participant.

DVULI staff first selected 30 graduates across a broad range of ages, ministry experiences, ethnic backgrounds, and locations for these interviews, with the understanding that only ten cases would be analyzed by researchers, with the remaining balance of cases providing stories and quotes for future promotional materials and website communications.

Researchers next developed an interview guide in conjunction with DVULI staff. Broad questions covered the impact of the DVULI training on the graduates' personal lives, ministry, and the community or communities that they served. The interview guide contained 13 multi-part questions relating to impact of DVULI training on: 1) personal life; 2) professional life and ministry; 3) interactions with DVULI graduates; and 4) reflections on the DeVos Experience. Copies of the interview guide can be obtained from the Principal Investigator of this evaluation.

Data Collection Methods

Online Surveys

All DVULI graduates with known e-mail or mailing addresses were asked to complete the large online survey regarding DVULI program impact, strengths, challenges, and possible directions for the program's future. Surveys were collected by Calvin College through an online website during late summer and early fall, 2006. We sent requests to complete the survey to all known addresses of former graduates, totaling 389 persons. Seventy percent of these graduates completed this survey, totaling 272 graduates.

Focus Groups

The focus groups were organized in each city by the former Director of the Initiative, Mr. Ron Carter. Mr. Carter was the Director during three of the years that the program had been

operating and had developed personal relationships with many participants. He contacted each member of the target cities' graduating cohorts and invited them to participate in the focus group sessions. He arranged the time and location and then met Dr. Curtis VanderWaal, PhD, this evaluation's Principal Investigator, and his Graduate Assistant in the host city, introduced them to the group, then left the room while researchers conducted the focus group interviews. All interviews were conducted between September 2006 and January 2007.

All focus group interviews were led by Curt VanderWaal. Most groups lasted approximately two hours. Research assistance was provided by a Master's level graduate student, who helped with food setup and microphone coordination and also took detailed notes on the interactions. At the start of the interview, all graduates were told that there were no right or wrong answers; it was their opinion that counted, even when they disagreed with others in the group. They were also told that they were free to not participate or to leave at any time during the interview - if they decided not to participate they would not be penalized in any way. Finally, they were told that their individual responses would remain confidential but their cities would be identified in comments.

During the focus group, researchers used a digital recorder to record the group discussion. They then downloaded each conversation into a computer for later transcription and analysis.

Case Studies

Mr. Ron Carter contacted all participants, scheduled interviews, and conducted the interviews himself. Almost all case study participants were located in cities where researchers conducted the focus groups. In some cases the case study participants also participated in the focus group interviews, but in other cases this did not occur.

Twenty-three interviews were conducted by Mr. Carter. Graduates were told that the main focus of the interview was to discuss the impact of their DVULI experience on their personal life, their ministry, and the community or communities that they served. They were also told that the ideas from the interview would be used by DVULI staff to better understand, improve, and highlight the program. In the consent form, graduates were clearly told that their names would be used in the write-up and any publication of the case study.

During the focus group, Mr. Carter used a digital recorder to record the interview. He then downloaded each conversation into a computer for later transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis Methods

Online Survey

Survey results were compiled and cleaned by researchers at Calvin College. Using Stata statistical software, they developed statistical reports containing descriptive statistics such as frequencies, averages, standard deviations, and cross tabulations. For the purposes of this report, researchers will primarily be describing the findings using percentages. Comparisons between groups were conducted by running cross tabulations and discussing differences with at least a ten percent variation.

Focus Groups

Digital recordings of all surveys were first transcribed and then loaded into a qualitative software package called QDA Miner. Next, two researchers (the Principal Investigator and a Graduate Assistant) used categories found in the focus group interview guide to independently conduct initial coding to identify preliminary themes and key word categories. The researchers then met to discuss and reconcile their coding selections. Once all focus group comments had been coded, all comments were compiled into one large document, enabling researchers to compare comments across categories and cities. Finally, using the constant comparative method, researchers conducted axial coding to develop themes and sub-themes within each major category, across all focus group responses. Summaries of these themes, along with representative quotes, were then written for each section of the document.

Case Studies

The primary purpose of these interviews was to tell the rich stories of graduates' experiences with the Initiative. For this reason, researchers used a less rigorous form of content analysis to maintain consistency of analysis across cases along with a more reader-friendly, magazine-style format for the write-up. This approach attempted to balance the integrity of the analysis with a story-based format for easier reading enjoyment.

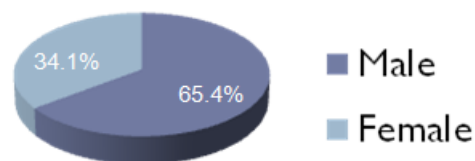
Ten case study interviews were first transcribed into word processing software. Researchers then used the interview guide to develop a framework for writing up the narratives. Interview guide categories were then consistently used as headings and sub-headings within each narrative, while allowing researchers freedom to tell the graduates' stories in a more creative and narrative style.

Description of Participants

Profile of Online Survey Participants

As noted earlier, we sent requests to complete the online survey to all known addresses of former graduates, totaling 389 persons. Seventy percent of these graduates, two-thirds (65.4%) of whom were male (see Figure 1.1), completed this survey, totaling 272 graduates. We later dropped one person from this list due to incomplete and inconsistent response patterns, leaving 271 graduates for our final analysis. Graduates from twenty cities answered survey questions, with an average of almost 14 people responding from each city. Denver and Kansas City had the highest number of respondents and Paterson, NJ and Pittsburg had the lowest response rate. Graduates who completed their training from 1998-2005 responded to the questions, with fairly even numbers of responses from each graduating class.

Figure 1.1



Survey respondents ranged from ages 23 to 68, with an average age of 42 years (see Figure 1.2). The majority (60.2%) of the graduates were between ages 36-50, with another quarter (23.3%) being between ages 23-35 and the remaining 16.5% between ages 51-68.

FIGURE 1.2

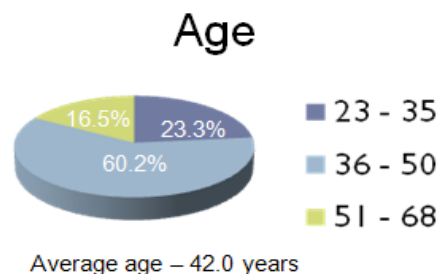


Figure 1.3 shows that slightly over half (51.5%) of all respondents identified themselves as Black or African American, almost one-fourth (23.5%) said they were White or Caucasian, almost one-fifth (19.9%) described themselves as Latino or Hispanic, with the remainder selecting Multi-racial (2.6%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.5%), Native American (.4%), or Other (1.1%).

FIGURE 1.3

Ethnicity	
Black / AA	51.5%
White / Caucasian	23.5%
Latino / Hispanic	19.9%
Multi-racial	2.6%
Asian / Pac Island	1.5%
Native American	0.4%
Other	1.1%
No Answer	1.1%

Figure 1.4 shows that close to half (42.7%) of the respondents had been in professional ministry between one and ten years, with 37.4% in ministry between 11-20 years. Not quite one-fifth had been in professional ministry between 21-30 years and less than three percent had been in ministry for more than 30 years.

FIGURE 1.4

Number of Years	%
0 - 10	42.7
11 - 20	37.4
21 - 30	17.5
31 - 40	2.4
41 - 50	0.4

Profile of Focus Group Participants

A total of 76 people participated in focus group interviews, representing a broad cross-section of ages, genders, ethnicities, and church affiliations. Because 30% of the survey respondents also participated in the focus groups, graduates in both groups had very similar demographic profiles. However, there were several minor differences. Compared to the online survey participants described above, focus group participants had: 1) 8% more graduates in the 36-50 age group but 8% less graduates in the 51-65 age group; and 2) 10% more Latino/Hispanic graduates, but 5% less White/Caucasian graduates and 5% less Black/African

American graduates. In addition, 61% of all focus group participants came from the last three graduating classes – 2004, 2005, and 2006.

Figure 1.5 shows that, of the nine cities where focus groups were conducted, Houston, Denver and San Diego had the highest participation rates, while Philadelphia and Orlando had the lowest participation rates. In all cities more graduates were recruited and agreed to attend than actually attended the groups.

FIGURE 1.5

City	# of Persons
Grand Rapids	8
Chicago	7
Philadelphia	5
Albuquerque	7
Houston	13
San Diego	11
Orlando	6
Indianapolis	7
Denver	12
TOTAL	76

Limitations of this Evaluation

The first limitation of this report is that researchers were unable to collect information from all graduates. Although 70% of graduates with known addresses completed the online survey, around 50 graduates were not included in the invitation to complete the online survey because DVULI staff had lost contact with them. It is possible that graduates in this group represent a somewhat different picture than the group who did respond – for example, they may have voluntarily chosen to break contact with DVULI staff for various reasons or they may have moved to another location, thereby separating themselves from their original city’s training cohort. Such differences would likely skew results in a less favorable direction since these graduates might be less likely to use their values and skills in partnership with other DVULI graduates. That said, a response rate of 70%, representing 271 graduates, is a very strong representation of most graduates and readers can, with a reasonably high degree of confidence, be assured that the survey accurately represents the views of most DVULI

graduates. Participation was also high across all years of graduation, leading us to conclude that we had strong and fairly balanced representation through all the years of the program.

Second, not all cities are represented in focus group findings and some cities are more heavily represented than others due to higher group turnout. However, graduates who did attend fairly closely reflected the gender, age, graduation year, and ethnicity of the survey respondents, leading researchers to believe that the focus group participants accurately reflected the larger group of respondents. In addition, researchers began hearing similar themes from all the groups. This redundancy or saturation of themes is considered to be a critical element in a focus group's reliability.

Third it is possible that graduates with stronger ties to DVULI and its former director were more likely to attend the focus groups, possibly resulting in more favorable responses on the part of group members. Researchers attempted to minimize this effect by having Mr. Carter leave the room during the group and reminding participants that their comments would remain anonymous.

Finally, in order to increase participation, focus group participants from two graduation years participated in the same focus group within each city. While this strengthened the understanding of ways in which graduates from different cohorts interacted with each other, it minimized researchers' abilities to understand differences between cities since graduates were trained in different years and had developed primary bonds with those who were in their graduating cohort. Different years of graduation also meant that they were in very different places in implementation of their Breakthrough Plans and abilities to network with other individuals and resources within their communities.

Organization of the Report

This report is divided into two volumes containing three sections: Section I is found in the first volume and is titled *Impact on Personal Leadership and Ministry*. This section describes the wide variety of ways in which DVULI leadership training has changed graduates' personal and professional lives.

Section II, found in the second volume, is titled *Impact on Community and City*. This section describes the various ways that DVULI training has influenced how and in what ways that graduates have reached out to their community, their city, and to fellow DVULI graduates.

Finally, Section III, also found in the second volume, is titled *The Road Ahead*. This section explores differences in graduates' survey responses across variables such as gender, age, years in ministry, year of graduation, city size, hours per week spent in ministry, paid vs. volunteer ministry, and whether graduates remained in youth ministry. The chapter makes recommendations for future changes to both recruiting and curriculum development in each of these areas and concludes with other suggestions for changes made by the graduates

themselves. Finally, because of the intensity, quality, and relational nature of the DVULI training, the concluding chapter describes what has come to be called the DeVos Experience, a complex combination of searching self-examination, intense sharing between staff, presenters, and participants, and generous hospitality from the DeVos family and DVULI staff.

Chapter 2

Leadership Transformation

Preparation for Leadership

The DVULI Alumni Survey first asked graduates to respond to the question “DVULI training has prepared me for leadership in my community.” As seen in Figure 2.1, virtually every graduate either answered “*Strongly Agree*” (62.5%) or “*Agree*” (32%). Only 5.5% answered “*Neutral*” (3.3%), “*Disagree*” (1.5%) or “*Strongly Disagree*” (.7%), indicating that their DVULI training had not really prepared them for leadership in their community. The overwhelmingly positive response to this question leaves no doubt that graduates believed that they were well prepared to provide strong leadership within their communities.

FIGURE 2.1



In order to better understand the different ways in which graduates felt prepared to provide leadership within their communities, we asked the following focus group question: “In what ways did DVULI training prepare you for leadership?” A variety of themes emerged across

all nine groups. Major themes included: 1) broader vision and focus for ministry; 2) development of new ministry tools and resources; 3) strengthening current skills; and, 4) new ways of thinking about ministry. Minor themes included: 1) importance of building relationships and sharing ministry roles; 2) courage to ride out rough spots in ministry; and 3) information overload. As a result of these changes in perspective, graduates believed they became better people and the quality of their ministries had improved.

Broader Vision and Focus for Ministry

Graduates were clearly transformed by their DVULI training. For a large number of graduates this meant that their personal vision for their ministry came into sharper clarity, with clearer ministry priorities that emerged through the training process.

"I came in here with no priorities and I had to go through program priorities...I went from a small mindset to seeing the big picture...." ~Philadelphia

"...it actually helped us narrow our mission...." ~Chicago

For some graduates this was accomplished through the development of their breakthrough plan (discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 6 of this report). As a result, new ministries emerged or the participant's current ministry became more focused and targeted.

"...it [the Breakthrough Plan] really helped me look much further and much broader and I had to go back to that plan. I have not done it on the scale that I set out through the Breakthrough Plan...definitely fewer steps have been accomplished, which was good." ~Orlando

"...it brought forth new ministry and new opportunity instead of just waiting for chance to come my way." ~Albuquerque

For other graduates, their sense of ministry broadened and deepened. These individuals began taking a longer view of ministry that went beyond budget crises and getting-through-the-day frustrations toward a more reflective, future-thinking orientation.

"...most of us were involved in leadership at some level and I think the DeVos brought us into a group where we began to think about it a little more than just running the program and just doing what we were doing – to think about it a little more broadly than that." ~Chicago

"...[I started] really looking at ministry from a long perspective rather than trying to accomplish everything and having results immediately and really thinking about the things that need to be built and solved before fruit can really be had..." ~Denver

"...[DVULI] challenged me in a good way because if I hadn't taken the time to reflect on where we were and to really prepare for and really transition my mindset from a higher education, fundraising-type thing, looking fully into ground-level leadership and ministry, I would have never been able to set the course to where we are today." ~Orlando

"I think one way that the initiative helped me be a better leader was to begin to not look at results in terms of head count or just numbers, but what kind of life changes were happening in the kids, but also to begin to ask myself 'why does this work?' or 'why didn't it work?', and to begin to look at the bigger picture..." ~Denver

Development of New Ministry Tools

For many graduates, DVULI training provided skills that allowed them to engage in ministry with a new set of practical tools, thus adding to their credibility and effectiveness in ministry.

"...it's not just a barrel of jargon either; it's actual stuff that we use and put into practice." ~Grand Rapids

"It's like when you talk, you are talking about something with substance. I mean, people sell ice cubes to an Eskimo...you are deadly with a lie, which is downright lethal with the truth in a sense. And so for me it's helped me tremendously, even with not wrecking people's lives anymore." ~Indianapolis

"...it absolutely changed even how I do ministry. As a matter of fact, so much so now that our ministry is better as a result of the program. I thought I was doing pretty well then, but it's a whole 'nother level now, like magic." ~Houston

While these skills are described in more detail in Chapter 5, several examples of the impact of these tools were provided by graduates:

"...we're a multi-generational, community-focused Christian church and that came right out of this whole vision structure and moving it forward.... You've got 75, 80 year old people saying, 'Well, what can I do'? Whereas, two years ago they were like, 'I wish that boy would sit down'. But they're starting to see it." ~Houston

"I know that being involved and receiving the training and growing allowed me to lead beyond the ministry. It allowed me to become a leader on a greater level within the community because when I first came, I was an unknown entity and nobody knew me. I just came trying to work in ministry and keep the lights on... but being involved in DeVos gave me an opportunity to do some things state-wide...." ~Orlando

“When we got involved with DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative, we just had an idea of where we thought we can go, but since then we’ve done well over a million dollars worth of construction, you know, in the building that was really struggling.” “So I think when you talk about impact, if you walk into the ministry you can see it in terms of what’s happened pre-DeVos. Because I can show you pre-DeVos pictures and show you post-DeVos pictures - it’s a huge, huge change.” ~Orlando

Some participants described these skills as being flexible and portable, thus allowing them to apply the principles behind the skills in varied ways and in new settings, beyond youth ministry in some cases. A number of graduates discussed how the DVULI principles could sustain their ministry for a lifetime of service.

“When I started [in DVULI training], I was months into ministry, you know. And now, years later, serving a different capacity, a different arena, still being able to use the same stuff. It’s powerful for me.” ~Grand Rapids

“I’m not with my particular group of youth that I originally started in but I’m taking the tools that I learned from DeVos and I’m moving in a different area, with different people, so it’s helped me organize.” ~Indianapolis

“...what we learned was almost like it was universal. It adapts personally to you and you can use it in whatever setting in terms of, you know, taking care of yourself, the leadership pieces and all of that. ~Grand Rapids

Strengthening Current Skills

For some participants, DVULI training wasn’t as much about learning new skills as it was about strengthening skills they already possessed. Sometimes these old skills didn’t have names and DVULI training helped them to label what they had been doing and improve the quality of that skill. In other cases, graduates described how they needed to be re-trained in old skills in order to sharpen their skills and effectiveness. One graduate described DVULI training as a “finishing school”, helping him to build his capacity to successfully set priorities, accomplish tasks, and communicate with others more clearly.

“I am working with so many different issues with kids and DeVos helped me learn those different styles and leadership skills and all of that, in all of those areas and that made such an impact on me to walk into a situation like that and remember some of those things that I had just learned.” ~Indianapolis

“It allowed me to see how much I started to cut corners. It’s almost like driving - you first start off with both hands at the wheels and then you are driving with your legs with a sandwich here and a phone here. I figured out that I needed to go back to the basics and so going back to the basics allowed me to be a better trainer and I needed that. ~Orlando

"...it gave me some additional tools and, more importantly, a language, a language to work with, put handle on certain things and ideas and concepts..."
~Philadelphia

New Ways of Thinking about Ministry

For some graduates, DVULI training created a more holistic sense of what constituted ministry. For some this meant a more ecumenical view of ministry partnerships, while for others it meant figuring out ways to link their local communities into their ministry plans and activities.

"...our mechanism for bringing people to Christ has expanded...we're becoming more holistic in terms of our ministry to people...." ~Orlando

"...it stretched me beyond what I could think about ministry." ~Albuquerque

"...the tools that I've learned, you know, isn't [just] for youth ministry, it was to sustain you in life. It was so much broader." ~Grand Rapids

"...the last two, three years I have been meeting every Tuesday...with a group of pastors in my community. We will pray for the community and we have done specific things in terms of city transformation, reformation. That is something I believe that was stirred having gone through the Initiative. You know, again, shared vision and interdependence, just knowing that it's just not you in a small corner, it's bringing all the little lights together into one big flame." ~Orlando

Several participants described how important this perspective was within urban ministry settings:

"In minority ministry, African American primarily, I believe that we run about 15-20 years behind youth ministry from what we call the dominant culture, and so...coming into this thing after experiencing youth ministries in various different settings, I found that we, that there were other areas so much more progressive, but in the minority community we were doing our best to stay afloat, and so the level of support that comes from leadership, has not always been there...."
~Houston

They found the new ways of leadership thinking particularly valuable because they came with an urban perspective and focus, led by trainers with real-life experience and expertise in urban ministry issues. Tailoring the leadership principles in this way helped participants feel validated in their concerns and created an appreciation for the unique knowledge base of the trainers.

“...they [the trainers] understood our people...I mean it was people who had been in an urban setting, so it really connected with me, and it was a great encouragement.” ~Albuquerque

As a result of their preparation for leadership, participants felt prepared to provide leadership to children and youth within an urban setting.

Several minor themes emerged from the focus group discussions as well. While a lower number of graduates mentioned these themes, they were described frequently enough to validate their importance as key indicators of graduates' preparation for leadership.

Importance of Building Relationships and Sharing Ministry Roles

Several graduates discussed the importance of building relationships with other ministry partners, particularly other DVULI graduates. These relationships were thought to be vital to the effectiveness of the ministry, with the best blend of leadership requiring strong ministry skills paired with strong relationship connections that one DVULI graduate called "coming into community". In many cases this took the form of stepping back and empowering others to develop their personal interests and talents (more detailed discussions of Empowerment can be found in Chapter 3).

"And so we can build all the skills that we want, but if we don't have relationships that connect us to the places where we can use them, or give us access to opportunity, then we're going to be a really frustrated, highly skilled person. Or if we build all these relationships and we gain access without building our skills than we have all the access but we're not qualified to take advantage of the opportunities." ~Chicago

"...being willing not to have my hands on everything but to empower the people around me and to allow them to do what they do best, and just basically stand back and watch everything happen...." ~Denver

"I think it helped me not feel so alone, because I was, honestly, felt very alone in ministry. Just me, and if I don't have the answer, I better make one up 'cause I don't know where else to turn. Especially now that I'm in this position where I'm way the heck over my head, I'm glad I've got people now to turn to, 'cause I don't have all the answers and the ones I make up would probably be horrible...." ~Denver

Courage to Ride Out Rough Spots in Ministry

Several graduates described being stuck in their ministries or feeling that their ministries were growing flat or stale. Training in the DVULI program helped them come through these rough spots and take initiative to jump-start their ministries with new perspectives and stronger decision-making.

"I ended up going through a time in my life where nothing clicked ministry-wise. It didn't matter what I tried, it didn't go, or it went the other way or it took a detour. But I think the DeVos program, looking back, actually probably gave me a little oomph to actually kind of get through that period of time." ~Chicago

"...DeVos really held me to say, 'You know what, you have to make some decisions and then act on those decisions and stop sitting around, waiting for something to change that's not going to change...' ~Denver

Information Overload

Finally, several graduates talked about sometimes being overwhelmed by the Initiative. The amount of information provided in the training sessions was described by several people as being like 'drinking from a fire hose – you got more on you than you got in you'. Fortunately, graduates generally felt that the tools they had gained were so profound that they could easily spend the rest of their ministry exploring and building on the resources that DVULI training had introduced.

"He [one of the DVULI trainers] kept telling me, 'You'll understand it, you'll understand it' and so I was like, 'I will take the plunge and what I get, I get and I don't get, I don't get' and I think I got quite a bit." ~Philadelphia

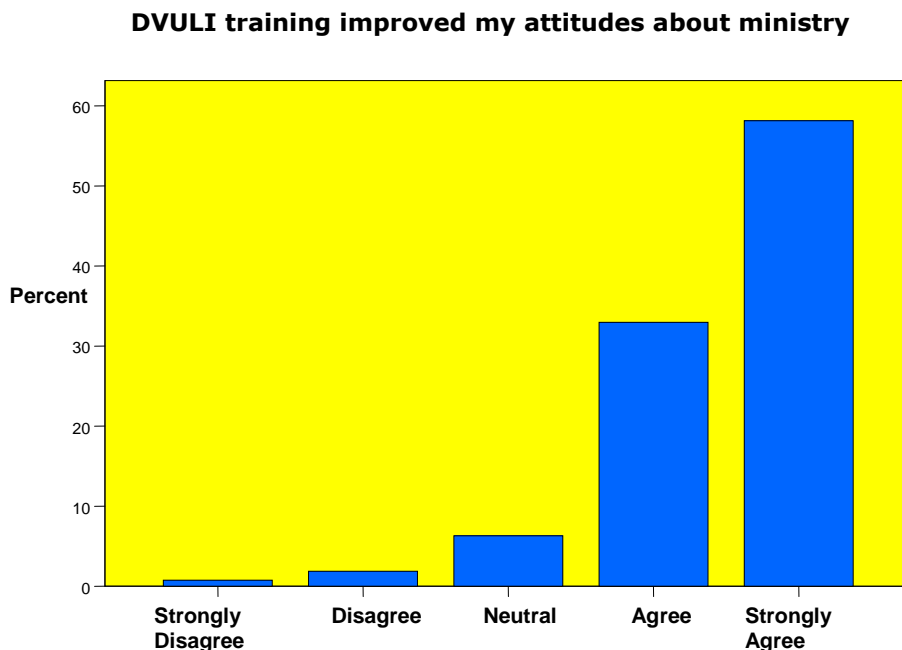
"...not only did you get the fire hose, you also got a water hose, so you can go back and take a small longer drink of water." ~Denver

"...the 15 months [of training] just scratched the surface. I think we could spend the rest of our lives developing and exploring each of those skill sets and values and there would be more than enough resources for us to work, to develop the rest of our, you know, another 30 years." ~Denver

Changes in Attitudes towards Ministry or Leadership

The DVULI Alumni Survey next asked graduates to respond to the statement “*DVULI training improved my attitudes about ministry.*” As seen in Figure 2.2, over 90% of graduates either answered “*Strongly Agree*” or “*Agree*”. Less than 10% answered “*Neutral*”, “*Disagree*”, or “*Strongly Disagree*”.

FIGURE 2.2



Based on these responses, there is no doubt that the vast majority of graduates changed their attitudes about ministry as a result of the Initiative. What is less clear from this survey question is how they changed their attitudes. To better understand the ways in which graduates felt their attitudes towards ministry had been transformed, we asked the following focus group question: “*In what ways did DVULI change your attitudes about your own ministry or about youth ministry leadership?*” A variety of major themes emerged across all nine groups, including: 1) holistic vision for ministry; 2) connected or re-connected with ministry; 3) more proactive or focused about ministry; and 4) enhanced ministry reflection. Several minor themes also emerged, including: 1) reduced self-importance; 2) increasing self-awareness and growth; and 3) God-centered ministry. As a result of these changes in attitude, graduates believed that their ministries improved and they became better people.

Holistic Vision for Ministry

In this largest category, graduates described an expanded, more holistic vision for ministry. This expanded vision included both broad statements about changes in their thinking as well as two major sub-themes describing new perspectives on community building and new ways of empowering others in ministry.

The word ‘holistic’ came up numerous times as graduates described how the Initiative had changed their thinking regarding what ministry meant and how ministers functioned. In the past, graduates commented that they usually focused on traditional ministry roles such as prayer, bible study, and church attendance. Prior to DVULI training, they often didn’t consider the entire person and their needs. However, graduates now think more comprehensively and positively about the connections between a person’s spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs. Such thinking makes all of life a ministry rather than just fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities of a traditional minister.

“...the church thinks their job is...teach[ing] people how to pray, read the bible, and go to church. Now we're living in a time where there's so much moral break down and we have to teach people how to be people, how to be functioning and contributing to society and that's the gospel. It's complete restoration, it's Titus women mentoring younger women, and men mentoring boys. It's people raising, not disciple raising.” ~Albuquerque

“So it's really changed my attitude in terms of, I need to make sure that I am hitting people where they live in terms of what their needs are instead of me determining, ‘this is where you are at, this is what you need’. Make sure that I am doing the right amount of assessment, of follow up....” ~Indianapolis

“It opened my perspective too, there's a lot more than just the [formal] ministry. I mean, my whole day or my whole life was about ministry and when they [DVULI trainers] started talking about balancing and leveraging and all of that, I opened up my eyes to a whole bunch of other people that could help.” ~Houston

A sub-theme within this same category revolved around the many ways in which DVULI training had opened graduates’ eyes to other ministry partners and their multiple talents, both within their own churches and across other church denominations. This led graduates to not only appreciate, but to also empower those around them to a much greater extent than they had prior to the Initiative – often for the first time.

“...one of the teachers that was teaching, he said, ‘no longer will I go alone’. And I've really embraced that ‘no longer will I go alone’ and think that it's all, you know, ‘if it's to be, it's up to me’. That was one of my sayings– ‘if it's to be, it's up to me’. So that got turned upside down....” ~Denver

“I think at one time I thought, ‘No I have to have someone all of the time do to this one thing’, but it helped me see other areas of how to use volunteers and a

program—how to sign them up and get their commitment and their commitment will be based on what they really wanted to do.” ~Houston

*“...the initiative taught me to appreciate the gift that other people have because we get to the same place but they have their style. It's not my style but we get to the same place and I get to appreciate and recognize and celebrate it....”
~Philadelphia*

*“...we all came from different backgrounds [for DVULI training], everything from purity ministry to puppet ministry to discipleship, one on one, and when we would gather as five cities, and talked about what we did, we crossed all kinds of boundaries to function as a ministry and right off the bat I saw it's not about equipping the church person and it was about equipping the minister....”
~Albuquerque*

This attitude of empowering others was not just generically stated; it was also expressed through a greater willingness to work with those whom they previously ignored or didn't take seriously as ministry partners: *“I think it made me a lot more open to work with people who I probably wouldn't have worked with before”*. For some graduates, this transformation crossed both gender and racial lines. For example, one individual described a new appreciation for the unique ministerial talents of one of his female co-workers:

“She's got game, she's on top of what she does and, not that I don't think that women have skills and all of that, it's just that once you see them put it into action and you see how gifted they are, like _____, her strengths and all that, and you have a chance to work close to her, you see her do what you can't do. There's a new appreciation that happens....” ~Denver

Another graduate described her new attitude on issues of racial diversity in leadership, describing the importance of diversity at every level of leadership:

“One of the things that the DeVos program helped me to realize is that diversity has to be from the top down. So, in other words, it's hard to have a diverse community and collaboration if the board is all Anglo or all Black or all Latino. And I think all of our organizations look a certain way at the top, and I had the opportunity to address the national board of trustees in my organization about that particular issue and it was a group of all Whites and I challenged them, like _____'s challenge, that to be unified and to really have the power of Christ, if that unity doesn't exist within the leadership of the organization, it will never exist within the community.” ~Denver

Several graduates also described how important it was for them to learn to empower the youth and youth leaders in their communities.

“I think a lot of us, even here in the circle, would agree that even our attitudes - in how we saw kids in the sense of leaders and learning to empower them - ...to

start to see that in challenging kids in that light and in that sense was attitude change as well.” ~Grand Rapids

*“Whereas I may not be able to impact change for my whole church right away, I can impact the leaders of my youth, of the youth department, you know?”
~Houston*

A second sub-theme within the category *Holistic vision for ministry* included new attitudes toward the wider community beyond the walls of their home church. The notions that community building and outreach went beyond traditional evangelism was a theme echoed by a number of graduates. Such thinking sometimes produced unorthodox ministry methods, with such outreach generally resulting in a much broader and larger audience for ministry.

*“...we will go do community outreach, have our radical style. We go out with blasting music, cars and dramas, and we still need to teach people to not only come to church on Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, whenever we have to service, but build your life around Christ in all areas and actually be a productive person.”
~Albuquerque*

“...whenever I thought ‘ministry’, it was always the local church...[but] the reason why communities are in such lack [is] some of the most qualified Christians who live on those blocks and within those communities are always at church doing some work in ministry, leaving a void right there in the community. So spend more time at home, you know. Just be out and available.” ~Denver

“...[the Initiative] made me take the look at relationship building and extending your family and not looking to the outside but looking to the inside, and not being afraid to go out to your neighbor’s door and saying, “Hey, how’re you doing, I’m so-and-so’ and you know that we’re the body of Christ....” ~Denver

Graduates also began to see that their role as youth leaders was a bridge to a much larger ministry within their communities.

*I think for me seeing youth ministry, rather than a stepping stone to what’s next or, we’ve said growing up, seeing that youth ministry can be everything. You know, like youth ministry could be the key to developing a community.
~Grand Rapids*

Connected or Re-Connected with Ministry

In the second major theme, graduates described how they became connected or re-connected with their core ministry. In some instances they had not been dedicating their whole lives to ministry, and DVULI training helped them to connect to a purpose and calling.

"I thought God's work was a play thing...but God revealed through DeVos that that was my call, and that was the wake up call for me, because I was pursuing something else. I never put my whole into God's work, because I never thought that could be my ministry, I never reviewed it that way." ~Albuquerque

"...I see myself now, like right now in my life, really being relational and purposeful. I struggled with that [prior to DVULI training]...." ~Grand Rapids

In other cases, graduates became re-energized as they became reassured that they were right where the Lord wanted them to be. This was particularly the case when they had been in ministry for a long time and were feeling burned out.

"[the Initiative] really helped clarify where I needed to minister. I also realized I was right where the Lord wanted me to be, so it was empowering to be able to eliminate any other options and give my full attention to whatever I was at, and it frees me up actually." ~Denver

"Everybody knows that working in ministry it is so easy to get burnt out - doing the same old thing, teaching the same old thing in ministry. So going through that Initiative and getting different insights on things has really changed my attitude and now I'm not that... ready-to-give-up type of person. I'll fight on a little while longer." ~Indianapolis

Proactive or Focused about Ministry

A third major theme for graduates was a sense that their attitude toward ministry had become more proactive or focused.

"I think that going through the Initiative actually helped me as far as...not sitting back in terms of leadership...." ~Albuquerque

"...the Initiative helped challenge me to help keep going and brought forth new ministry and new opportunity instead of just waiting for chance to come my way...." ~Albuquerque

Enhanced Ministry Reflection

A final major theme involved a shift in thinking that allowed graduates to take more time to reflect on where their ministry was going and how they wanted to move in that direction. For some this meant more time to read the leadership materials prepared by DVULI trainers, while for others it meant separating themselves from the fast pace of their ministry to reflect on ministry goals and priorities.

"I think the big change in attitude for me was the creation of my mind, body and soul. Before it was just my body and my spirit but it really wasn't my mind and so DeVos gave me an opportunity to really do some reflection and that was real important." "...the books for me were the biggest treasure and so just being able to...dive into that...and how would that impact my ministry...." ~Chicago

"I think my understanding of leadership before was to get a list of tasks done...you are always driving at things, you're not taking any space for reflection, you're not taking any space for evaluation...." ~Denver

*"It helped me think. You can get so locked into a context where you feel so needed and you don't know how to disconnect from the ministry you're plugged into. I think the DeVos program forced you to kind of re-think that a little bit.
~Chicago*

Reduced Self-Importance

The first minor theme, ‘*Reduced self-importance*’, refers to a shift in attitude that allowed graduates to focus less on their own agendas and become more inclusive in involving others in their ministry goals and plans. This shift was closely tied to the value of Empowerment in that graduates encouraged others to participate in ministry planning and outreach, thus helping graduates to give up some control over their own ministry priorities and share the credit for ministry progress and growth.

“...I made a lot of stuff to be about me and what I’m called to do and not so much as knowing people first and where they are at and it’s still a process of going through and not making it about me and what I’m called to do.” ~Indianapolis

“...it [the Initiative] really helped me have the attitude that in some ways I’m important and in some ways I’m not important. When I stepped back and went through all the events of the year, nothing suffered because I was gone. Before that I was pretty convinced that it would.” ~Chicago

Increasing Self-Awareness and Growth

In the second minor theme, graduates described how the Initiative helped them to increase their self-awareness and growth. That self-understanding helped them to think more critically, build character, and created a thirst for further growth.

*“...because of what we’ve learned I...feel like I am constantly evolving.”
~Grand Rapids*

“...I’m trying to be an objective thinker. Everything has to line up for me before I jump out there. Even now as we talk, I’m understanding myself better and the DeVos system. ~Indianapolis

“...it’s not what I drive anymore, it isn’t how you play basketball or how you look, it’s the person you are. Character qualities begin to grow and learning that in the leadership [program]...helped with that....” ~Grand Rapids

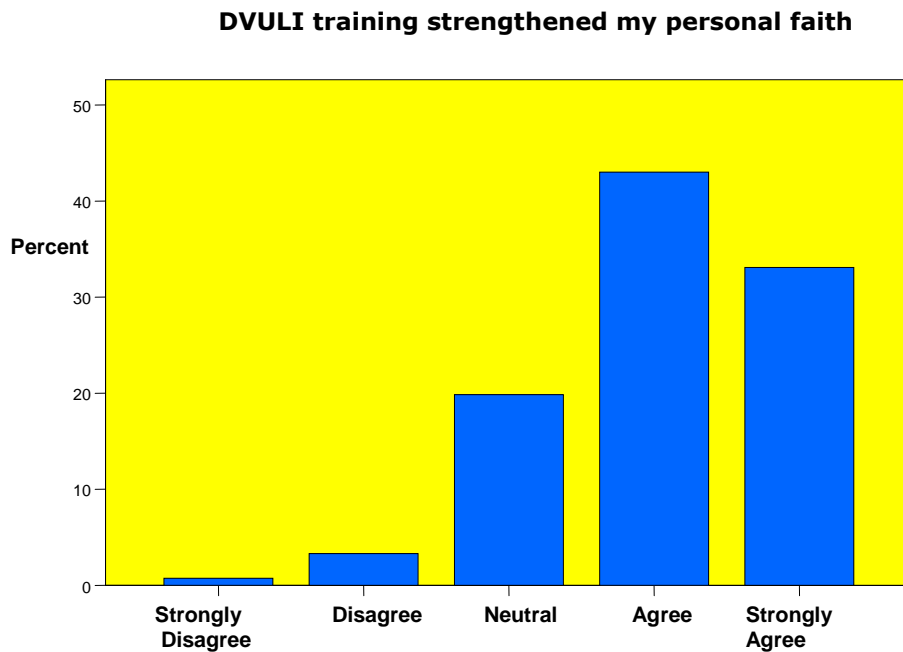
God-Centered Ministry

In the final minor theme, graduates discussed how their ministries became more God-centered as a result of the DeVos training. Prior to the Initiative, some felt that their ministries were about them and what they had accomplished. But as they went through the training, they learned that God was leading their ministry, not them. They were merely the channel through which God accomplished His plans.

“...you realize it's not your ministry and you hand it back to Him and that when your eyes start opening, until then I don't' think you see that, because you see as 'me, this is me, me, me'. [But] it's not about you at all, it's about God - so you hand it back to Him.” ~Albuquerque

“It [the Initiative] just changed my attitude to be able to have a plan filtered down from heaven through me and outward. ~Chicago

FIGURE 2.3

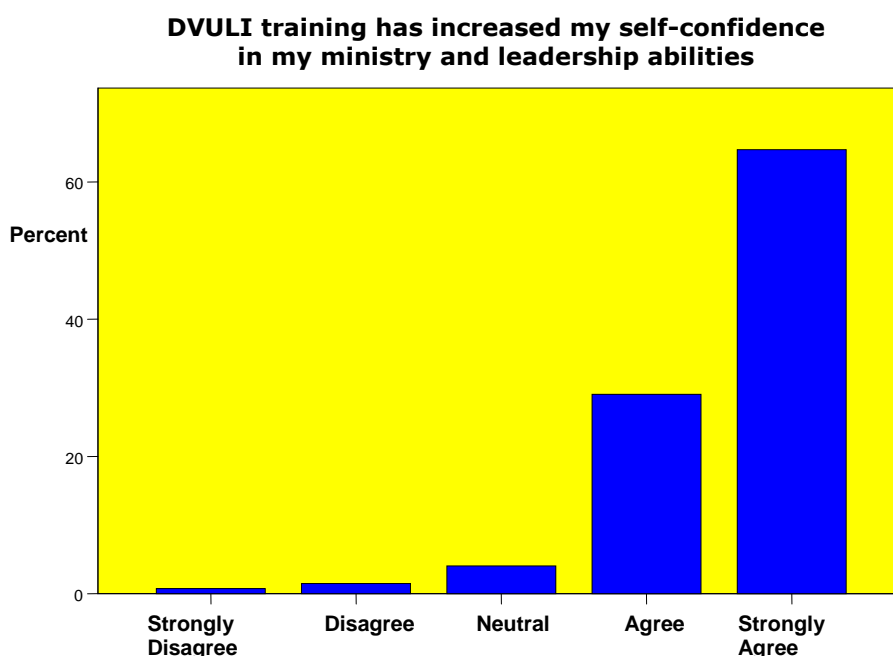


In a similar vein, and as further confirmation of this theme, Figure 2.3 shows the results of the question *“DVULI training strengthened my personal faith.”* Over three-fourths of all graduates (76.1%) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Such results clearly show that the majority of participants’ lives and ministries were strengthened and transformed in their connection to God and their perception His involvement and control over their ministries.

Improving Self-Confidence & Self-Image

Figure 2.4 shows the results to the Alumni Survey question “DVULI training improved self-confidence in ministry and leadership abilities”. More than half (64.7%) of the graduates responded with *Strongly Agree* and more than one fourth (29%) chose *Agree*. Four percent responded with a *Neutral* answer to this question, with 1.5% choosing *Disagree* and .7% selecting *Strongly Disagree*. The vast majority of DVULI alumni clearly agree that the training increased self-confidence in ministry leadership and abilities.

FIGURE 2.4



In order to more clearly understand the ways in which graduates’ self-confidence in ministry and leadership abilities had increased, focus group participants were asked “*In what ways did your self-confidence and self-image change as a result of DVULI training?*” A variety of themes emerged across all nine groups. Major themes included: 1) Tools for ministry and 2) Humility and interdependence. More minor themes included: 1) Courage to act; 2) Transparency and genuineness; 3) Learning confidence from others; 4) Self-love; and 5) Confidence in diversity. As a result of their increase in self-confidence, graduates believed that their leadership abilities increased and their ministries improved as a result. Several of the graduates made general comments regarding their increased self-confidence that could not be categorized in any particular theme. Comments included:

"It [the Initiative] made me feel good about what I was doing. ...it kind of set me in a place that said...'Man, you're special. You got some great opportunities to do some great things. And God smiled on you enough to get you this opportunity at such an optimum time in your life'." ~Houston

"...going through the Initiative, I'm more confident that we will see the fruit in ministry, more confident in marriage and more confident in myself as a person, and I'm confident in our ministry. The majority of the church look up to my leadership skills..." ~Philadelphia

Tools for Ministry

In this major theme, graduates described how their self-confidence increased as they gained practical tools to help them in their ministries. A number of graduates described learning new skills and leadership styles that helped them address church issues with clarity and self-assurance, sometimes stepping out boldly with a new vocabulary and other times consulting their DeVos notebooks to tighten up their thinking in particular areas.

"...DeVos helped me learn those different styles and leadership skills...in all of those areas and that made such an impact on me - to walk into a situation like that and remember some of those things that I had just learned." ~Indianapolis

"It also gave me kind of boldness and a vocabulary to be able to speak in a larger system setting, to be able to speak to supervisors or pastors or leaders above me. To be able to speak in an eloquent way in which they would be able to understand everything that I have always believed and thought but now I was finally given this vocabulary that can speak to them." ~Grand Rapids

"And so be able to run back, and believe me I was running back every week, reading the book before I go in [to a planning meeting]...." ~Orlando

Humility and Interdependence

In this second major theme, graduates described how their self-confidence was paradoxically rooted in the humility of now knowing how much they didn't know. As they let go of trying to control every aspect of their ministries, they became more free to involve others in their projects and plans. This newfound interdependence created greater self-confidence as they didn't feel as if they needed to be all things to all people.

"I really learned I have to go through some humility when things don't work. The first step of leadership is humbling yourself that you have to learn, and so I think...my self confidence is the fact that I know I don't know it all, but I'm learning, and I know I'm learning...." ~Albuquerque

"I think it was confidence that I don't have to have all the answers all the time. And by creating a bigger value of interdependence, I didn't have to feel, like to the kids or to their parents or to other staff members, that I was the 'end all be all'. I was able, in a much greater way, to be able to put myself in a more humble posture and say, 'Let's go find out the answer together or let's find the resource that you need; I don't have it right now'." ~Chicago

"I don't have to have all the answers. ... And so that's fine and it's made me feel good that we did it, not I. Because we can make a bigger impact than I ever could." ~Grand Rapids

Courage to Act

In the first minor theme, 'Courage to act', graduates discussed how the Initiative had given them a boldness and confidence to make decisions and move projects forward in situations where they would have been indecisive or paralyzed in the past. This was particularly important during times of transition and crisis, when the courage to act was particularly important. This led some graduates to move their ministries in new and bigger directions.

One person also described how their self-confidence initially dropped because they were so overwhelmed with all the information and transformational qualities of the DeVos training, but they later realized that the training had actually prepared them for major ministry and life decisions.

"It finally gave me a different perspective to remove myself from a ministry, a church and a denomination that were not going the same direction that I was. I felt very stuck and very unsure about where I was going before DeVos. And DeVos really helped me to say, 'You know what, you have to make some decisions and then act on those decisions and stop sitting around, waiting for something to change that's not going to change'. And so really now I'm in an amazing position because DeVos helped me get out of the place that was really a quagmire...." ~Denver

"[The Initiative] allowed me to become a leader on a greater level within the community because when I first came I was an unknown entity and nobody knew me. I just came trying to work in ministry and keep lights on.... But being involved in DeVos Urban Leadership allowed me to be involved in some state-wide initiatives, some county-wide initiatives and take the leadership that we developed in the inner city to another level. I don't know if I hadn't had that training, whether I had the right mentality to be able to go to take on those responsibilities or probably I would have been too overwhelmed." ~Orlando

"...looking back, I came out of the DeVos program really having grown a lot and been challenged and stimulated but then I ended up going through a time in my

life where nothing clicked ministry-wise. It didn't matter what I tried, it didn't go, or it went the other way or it took a detour. But I think the DeVos program, looking back, actually probably gave me a little oomph to actually kind of get through that period of time. ...it helped me as I transitioned again to where now I was like 'OK, cool'." ~Chicago

Transparency and Genuineness

In the second minor theme, 'Transparency and genuineness', graduates described how they became willing to talk and share more openly, allowing others to see them in more real ways. This led to greater self-confidence in ministry because they no longer felt the need to present false fronts or pose as someone other than who they really were, particularly around their Initiative colleagues.

"...its realness, I'm so real now, I've never been so real, no reason to front, this is who I am...." ~Albuquerque

"I felt less threatened with diversity of opinion and so forth, felt more ease to allow someone to throw out what you thought was great idea...." ~Orlando

"...just by being together, the group atmosphere that's created, you really learn to trust. But it's even more than just trust, you have that...level of comfortableness where you're not as afraid to talk anymore, maybe typical personality of what you are...." ~Albuquerque

Learning Confidence from Others

The third minor theme, 'Learning confidence from others', showed graduates learning how to develop self-confidence by watching other leaders role model it in formal and informal settings. The DVULI training also allowed them to practice their leadership skills in front of others, thereby increasing their confidence in their leadership abilities.

"I think pre DeVos, I did have some confidence issues. I felt I was competent to do the job that God brought me to, but didn't think other people felt I was competent sometimes. I was young - I'm younger than everybody I work with by 20 plus years, so that's a little bit intimidating for me. I guess being in a group of people who are of all different ages and we are were all going through the same things helped me to become confident...." ~Philadelphia

"...just about every one of us has changed stations in life—roles or responsibilities—from when we started. And just watching that it's possible to make transitions without falling off the end of the earth, so to speak, and

watching how other men do it, it gives me some concept of how it's done, of how to do it well, better....” ~Chicago

Self-Love

In the fourth minor theme, several graduates described how they came to love themselves as a result of the Initiative. This self-love translated into more self-confidence as they began to see that God had given them many gifts and abilities. One graduate specifically mentioned how the DeVos experience of being treated well had helped him to feel valued and loved within an urban ministry that is often disvalued by society.

“...until recently I wasn't able to look at myself as asset. I was still looking at myself as deficit, deficit, deficit. I would always say, ‘I'm not supposed to be who I am today’. I would say ‘I am not supposed to be living in Grand Rapids having a wife and two kids’. I'm not supposed to be because of the deficit mentality that I had in my self-image. And now being able to look at it and look at myself and say ‘You don't need to no longer say I'm not supposed to be’. And I think that it took years to be able to see myself and then once again the DeVos core values coming back and the teachings coming back to me years later to be able to say, ‘Wait a minute, check yourself on this. You are not deficit. You have many assets and the Lord has blessed you with many things and you are to use that for his glory’.
~Grand Rapids

“You don't know how to love others until you love yourself, so learned how to appreciate myself over time that I was in DeVos....” ~Albuquerque

“I hadn't done ministry in the urban setting for awhile, [it's] really not valued and just the way that they [DVULI staff] treated us as far as even the hotels and preparation, just some of the lavishness of the expense, it just caused me to start thinking ‘Wow, maybe I do have value’.” ~Chicago

Confidence in Diversity

The final minor theme, ‘*Confidence in diversity*’, describes several graduates’ confidence to relate to others who were different from them in some way. Several people mentioned increased confidence in working with people who were older than they were and several women described how they had gained confidence in ministry gifts within a culture that generally expected men to perform ministry functions.

“...it helped me gain confidence in...being able to minister to people who are old enough to be my grandmother.” ~Denver

“...I found that out when I really got to know a lot of the guys in the group [city cohort], they were like my brothers, instead of ‘oh I’m just down below them’. And it changed my whole outlook on my being a woman in ministry and I’m not intimidated anymore. And that really was a big issue for me.” ~Denver

Summary

The Initiative clearly had a powerful and transforming impact on graduates’ personal ministry and leadership. It first helped to prepare them for leadership by cultivating a broader vision and focus for ministry. It also helped them think in new ways about ministry, develop new ministry tools and resources, and strengthen their current ministry skills. In addition, the Initiative helped them understand the importance of building relationships and sharing ministry roles and gave them the courage to ride out the rough spots in their ministries. While some felt that they had received so much information they were unable to process it all at the time of the training, they found that the concepts kept coming back to them in a variety of situations and they were also able to consult with each other and the DVULI training manual when they needed to brush up on concepts and principles.

The Initiative also helped to transform graduates’ ministries by changing their attitudes in a variety of ways. Prior to their training, some participants were experiencing ministry burnout, but the DeVos program helped them re-connect with their ministry or become more proactive and focused about their ministry. For others, their vision for ministry became more holistic and inclusive, in some cases as a result of more enhanced ministry reflection. Graduates’ attitudes also shifted by reducing their own self-importance and becoming more God-centered and by increasing their self-awareness and personal growth. As a result of these changes in attitude, graduates believed that their ministries improved and they became better people.

Finally, graduates experienced an increase in their self-confidence in ministry, particularly those who were intimidated because of their age or gender. These changes emerged as they learned new tools for ministry but also as they began to cultivate a spirit of humility and interdependence with others. This emerging self-confidence helped them to love and respect themselves to a greater degree and also gave them the courage to act with confidence, but with an attitude of transparency and genuineness. This transformation was experienced through the mentoring of DeVos trainers as well as through peer mentoring from other participants. Without question, graduates’ preparation for leadership, attitudes towards ministry, and self-confidence were dramatically transformed through their participation in the Initiative. These changes are powerful, life-changing and long-lasting in nature and appear to have been experienced by the vast majority of participants.

Chapter 3

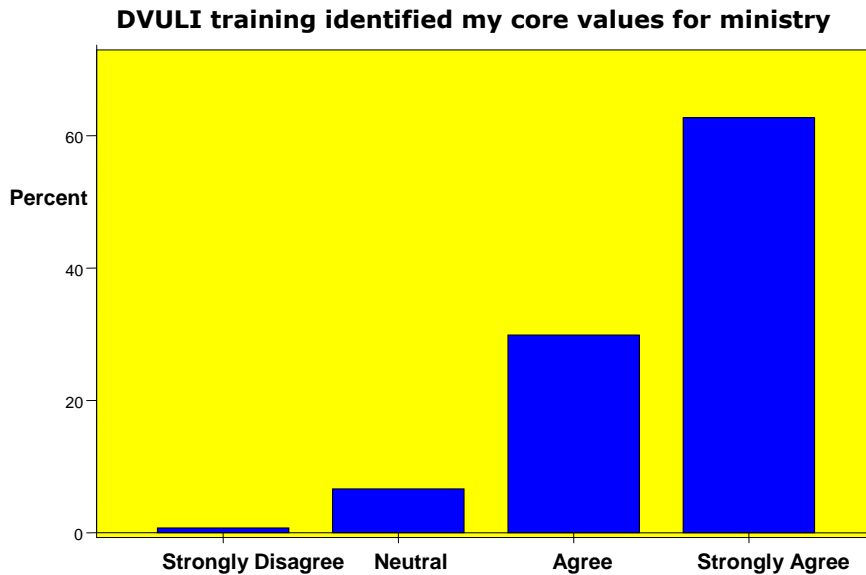
Changes in Core Values

Five core values are integrated into all areas of the DVULI training curriculum. DVULI staff have described the importance of these values as “*being* one’s best as the necessary foundation for *doing* one’s best.” Such core values have been identified by leadership experts and researchers as foundational to long-term, effective leadership. These core values include:

- 1) Balance. This value is defined by DVULI literature as the “development of the whole person. Participants learn how to identify their priorities, examine their use of time, and develop personal growth plans.” When any one area of life is out of balance, all areas suffer.
- 2) Accountability. This value is described as “regularly seeking feedback and guidance from trusted sources. Participants are also encouraged to know themselves more fully through personal reflection, open sharing, and supportive accountability relationships.”
- 3) Empowerment. This value is defined as leaders recognizing “the importance of bringing out the best in others. Participants learn how to identify others’ strengths, vary their leadership style, and implement appropriate strategies to develop the talents of those around them.”
- 4) Interdependence. This value is characterized by being an effective collaborator, in large part by being “aware of the rich resources present in their organizations and communities. Participants are challenged to identify those resources, build healthy partnerships, and work closely with others.”
- 5) Leverage. This value is described as knowing “how to use the positive potential of change, and knowing that seemingly small actions can have significant impact. Participants are encouraged to seek out strategic opportunities to create healthy, sustainable change.”

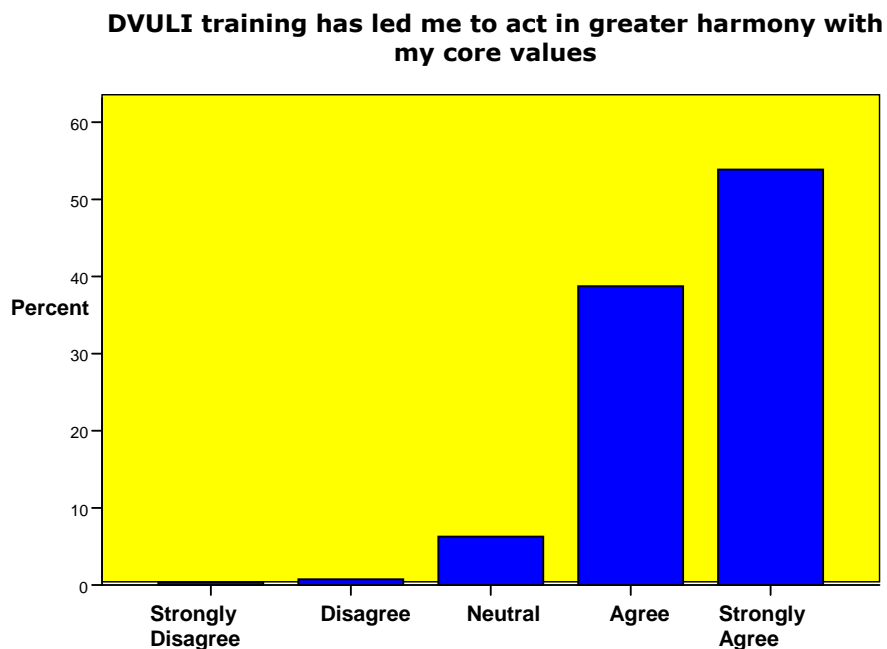
In the DVULI Alumni Survey, graduates were first asked to what extent “*DVULI training identified my core values for ministry.*” As seen in Figure 3.1, over 92% of all respondents either *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* with this statement. This response clearly shows that the message and importance of core values was powerfully absorbed by almost all of the participants.

FIGURE 3.1



The DVULI Alumni Survey next asked graduates to what extent “*DVULI training has led me to act in greater harmony with my core values.*” As seen in Figure 3.2, over half (53.9%) the participants *Strongly Agreed*, with over a third (38.6%) stating that they *Agreed* with this statement.

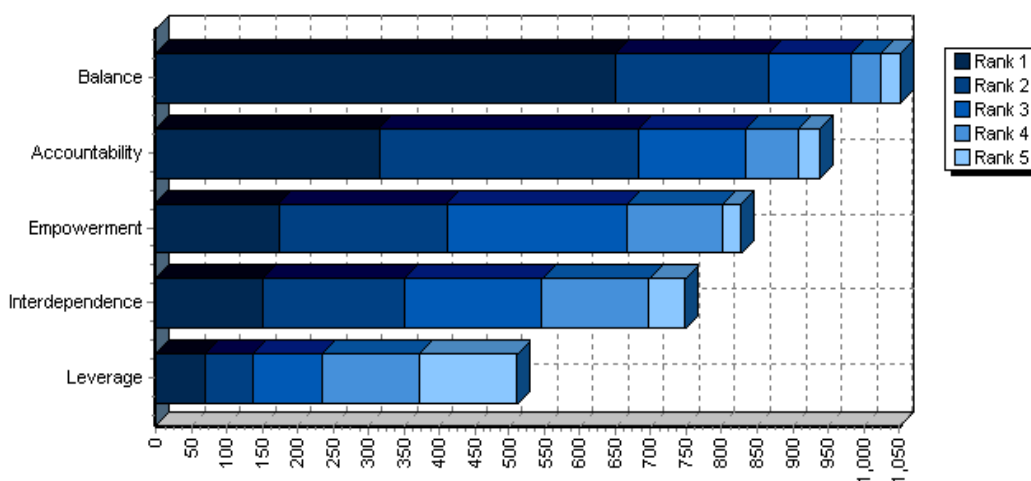
FIGURE 3.2



These responses clearly show that training around core values positively changed the way the majority of graduates behaved in relation to their values.

Graduates were also asked in the survey to rank from first (1) to last (5) each of the five core values in terms of importance to themselves and their ministry. As seen in Figure 3.3, graduates ranked Balance as more than twice as important to themselves and their ministry than any other value. Graduates ranked Accountability second in terms of importance, followed by Empowerment and Interdependence, with roughly equal rankings in terms of importance. Graduates ranked Leverage as least important of the five values. More detail regarding each of these rankings will be given in the individual values sections below.

FIGURE 3.3



The DVULI Alumni Survey next asked graduates to answer the following question in sentence form: *“Briefly describe how your #1-ranked core value has affected your ministry”*. Each written response was coded within the five major value themes, with minor themes described as they emerged from the coding process (please refer to the “Data analysis methods” section of this report for further details on the coding process).

The following sections first describe the major value in general terms, then list the minor themes and sub-themes that emerged through the process of coding graduates’ responses. Two to three representative quotes are used to illustrate major and minor themes and sub-themes. In addition, to gain a better sense of how regularly the graduates incorporated the values into their daily lives and ministries, each core value discussion includes graduates’ responses to the survey question *“About how frequently do you practice each of the following core values in your life and ministry?”* (each value was ranked separately by graduates). Finally, each section concludes with graduates’ responses that emerged when asked the following focus group question: *“Did your values or beliefs change as a result of the DVULI training? Give examples.”* These focus group responses will provide clearer insight into the specific ways in which graduates’ core values were changed and how these changes impacted their ministry and personal lives.

Balance

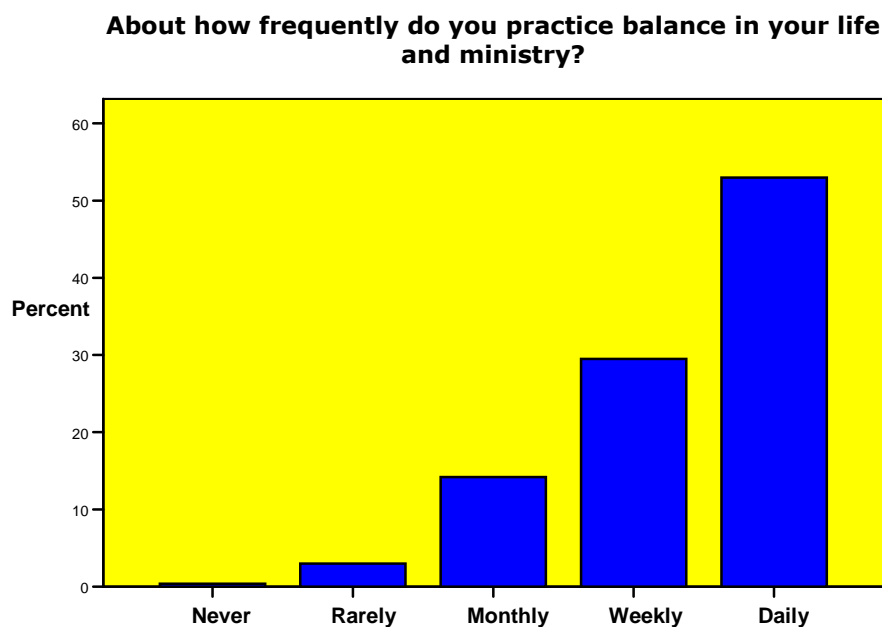
As mentioned above, the largest percentage of graduates (47.8%) chose Balance as their #1 core value. The strong preference for this value was similarly seen in the percentage of graduates who wrote positive comments about Balance in the DVULI Alumni Survey question *“Briefly describe how your #1-ranked core value has affected your ministry”*, with 57% of all comments relating to Balance in some way. Several graduates talked about balance in an overall way:

“It has helped me to keep harmony in my family life, church life, and professional life.”

“It took me awhile. even after the DVULI experience, to fully comprehend and realize how unbalanced I had become and how disconnected I was from certain realities in my life. Practicing balance on a daily basis is helping me to regain some stability in my life.”

“It is a continual struggle to maintain balance, but when I get balance right I feel as if I’m standing firm. Feeling that my feet are firmly planted helps me feel that I have something to offer. Balance is my personal empowerment tool. I feel stronger when things are balanced, and if I feel strong I feel that I can be of help to others.

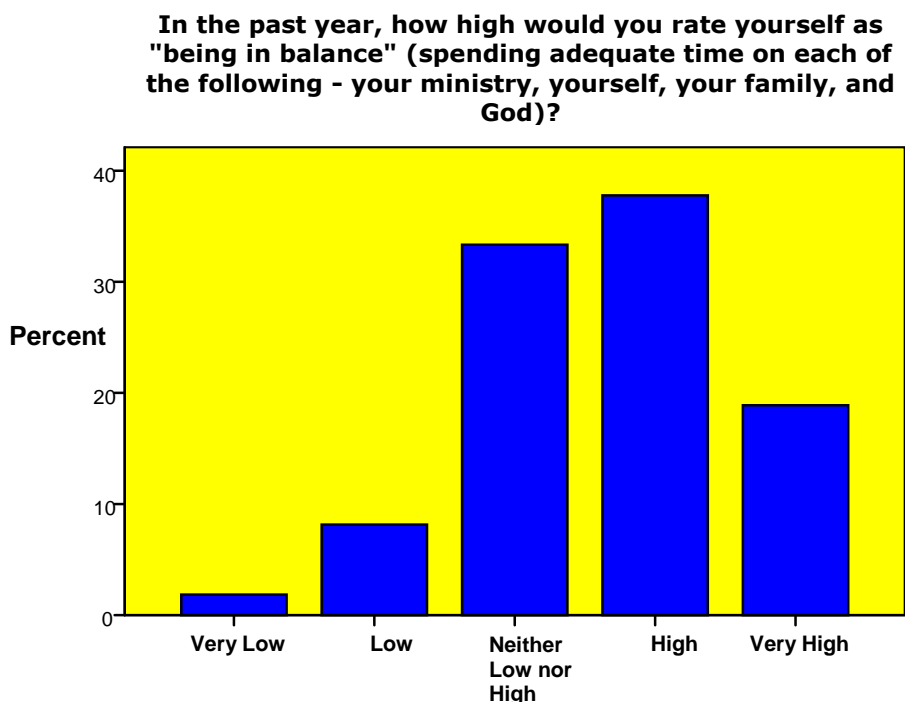
FIGURE 3.4



As seen in Figure 3.4, in response to the question *“About how frequently do you practice balance in your life and ministry?”*, over half of all graduates responded *“Daily”*, with almost one-third responding *“Weekly”*. Only 14% responded *“Monthly”*, with the remaining 3% responding *“Rarely”* or *“Never”*. As mentioned above, Balance was identified by graduates as the core value that was most important to their lives and ministries and it is clear that a strong majority of graduates continue to incorporate this value into their lives on a daily or weekly basis.

Graduates were also asked to rate their level of balance over the past year by responding to the following question: *“In the past year, how high would you rate yourself as ‘being in balance’ (spending adequate time on each of the following – your ministry, yourself, your family, and God)”*. As seen in Figure 3.5, over half of the graduates (56.7%) rated themselves as *“Very High”* or *“High”* on this question, with another third (33.3%) describing themselves as *“Neither High nor Low”*. Only 10% rated themselves as *“Low”* or *“Very Low”* in this area, indicating that, for the majority of graduates, balance generally did not appear to be a significant problem in their lives. When viewed over an entire year, this response shows a remarkably high level of participants who believed their lives to be in balance.

FIGURE 3.5



Within the major theme of Balance, we found minor themes and sub- themes throughout the graduates’ responses. These themes help to further elaborate specific areas of graduates’ lives that were impacted by Balance.

Personal Life Impact

The first minor theme is titled 'Personal Life Impact'. This theme includes issues such as better self-care, improved time management, peace of mind, burnout prevention, setting boundaries, and improved focus and intentionality.

Better Self-care. The graduates learned that their personal health and well-being were important to them as well as to their family, friends, and co-workers. Self-care can involve setting priorities for fun, family time, and exercise or other physical activities.

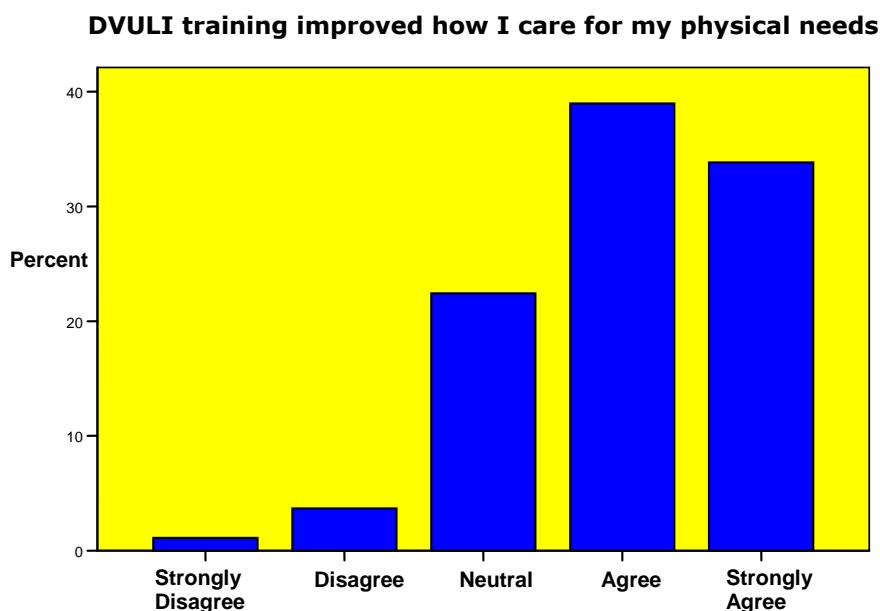
"To minister effectively I must have balance. My physical well being is essential to my family, work, and church community."

"If I'm out of balance, my work and health suffer."

"It took a while even after the DVULI experience to fully comprehend and realize how unbalanced I had become and how disconnected I was from certain realities in my life. Practicing balance on a daily basis is helping me to regain some stability in my life."

The DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates the question "DVULI training improved how I care for my physical needs." As seen in Figure 3.6, almost three-fourths of all respondents (72.8%) either "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed", with this statement, with 22.4% feeling "Neutral" about the question.

FIGURE 3.6



The remaining 4.8% either “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement, indicating that, with few exceptions, DVULI training had positively improved how graduates cared for their physical needs.

Improved time management. The graduates expressed the importance of making sure that the time they spent on tasks was of high quality and not wasted or spent frivolously. By using their time wisely, they could better manage their priorities and not get out of balance in any one area.

“When I start to feel myself getting overwhelmed I evaluate how I spend my time/resources/energy etc. and make adjustments.”

“Balance has shown me how to keep ministry and family equally involved.”

“I can minister better when I am not pulled in too many directions, am trying to apply this currently.”

Peace of mind. The graduates expressed a need for healthy tension between all areas of their lives. They also expressed relief when they did not have to feel guilty about taking personal time out for themselves.

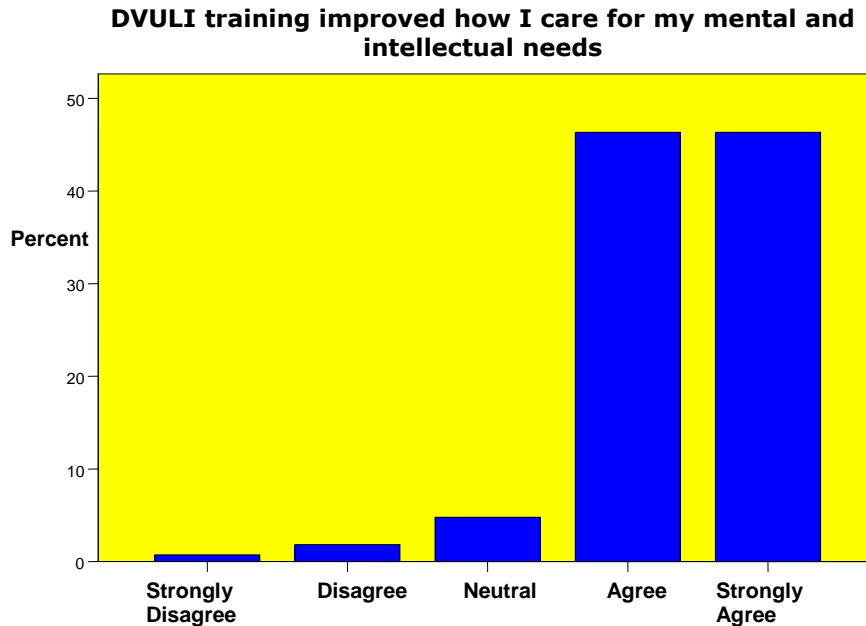
“Has given me more energy and peace of mind.”

“I believe that in order to be effective in ministry, we need to have a healthy balance in our life. When I am working too much, my personal life suffers and this affects my work. The reverse is also true. So, I need to maintain healthy tension between my work and my personal life.”

“I have a non-profit community service ministry/business of my own now and with a family to take care of also, I see the importance of balance in my life. If the balance wasn’t there, and it wasn’t top of my mind at all times, then my life would be in total shambles and I would be a wreck! Balance is important, very important, and with it everything falls into place more smoothly, there is more organization and harmony can thrive in and through my life more freely.”

The DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates the question “DVULI training improved how I care for my mental and intellectual needs.” While this question doesn’t directly relate to peace of mind, it is a broader question that indirectly addresses issues of mental and emotional balance. As seen in Figure 3.7, almost all of all respondents (92.6%) either “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed”, with this statement, with 4.8% feeling “Neutral” about the question. The remaining 2.5% either “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement, indicating that, with few exceptions, DVULI training had positively improved how graduates cared for their mental and intellectual needs.

FIGURE 3.7



Burnout Prevention. The graduates felt that Balance has also helped them to sustain a healthy and sustainable career. Prior to DVULI training, many individuals put their entire time and energy into their ministries, resulting in the threat of burnout. Their constant, fast-paced ministry lives left them with little or no time for anything but work, creating the tendency to wear out very easily. Applying the value of Balance to their lives has allowed them to thrive in ministry far longer than they otherwise might have without this value, with some commenting that they now enjoy ministry again.

"Balance has enabled me to still be involved in ministry for eight years by inoculating me against burnout."

"If you do not have balance in your personal/ministry life you are doomed for failure in my opinion."

"It has kept me going. If I had not learned balance early on in my ministry there is a good chance I would have been burnt out by now."

"If my life isn't balanced everything else will eventually crumble. I can't help someone else if I'm not well myself. I really appreciate this value that DeVos helped to instill in my life. Ministry is much more enjoyable for me!"

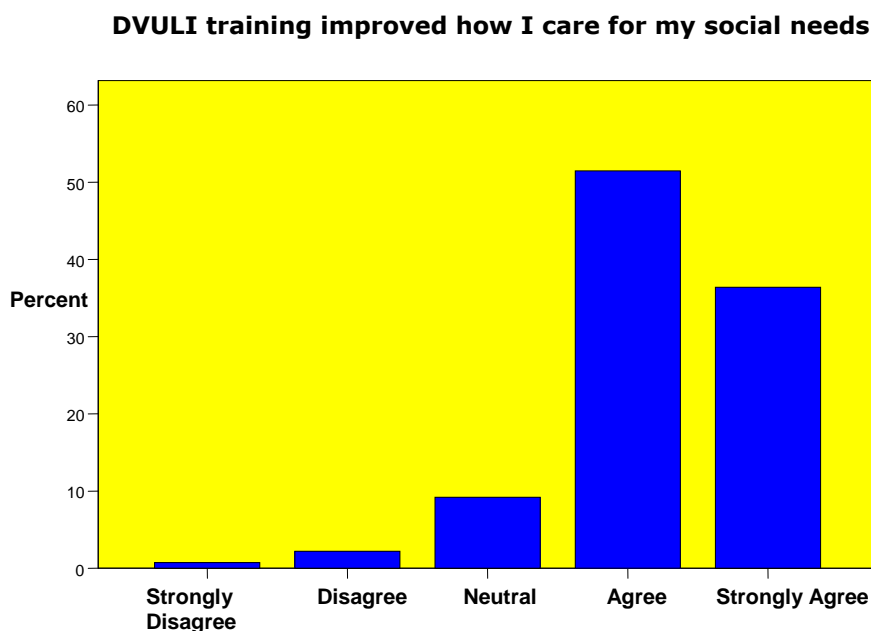
Setting Boundaries. The graduates expressed that, by applying the core value of balance, it had gotten easier to say ‘no’ to things that were not as important to the focused goals of their ministry and maintaining the overall balance of their lives.

“It has helped me first and foremost not to be so driven by ministry demands and needs, but rather from God’s will from spending time with Him and my family.”

“It has allowed there to have greater effectiveness in both my personal and ministry life. I have learned when to say no when something will cause me to be out of balance. Rather than finding myself in an unbalanced situation I evaluate the situation ahead of time.”

“It has helped me to be more realistic about what I choose to undertake and when. If my and others lives are going to be thrown completely out of balance as a result of the project we put more thought and planning into it and build more margin to ensure the outcome is fruitful in achieving the goal without sacrificing the personal well-being of the team.”

FIGURE 3.8



The DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates the question *“DVULI training improved how I care for my social needs.”* While this question does not directly relate to setting boundaries, it is a broader question that indirectly addresses the issue of social interactions. As seen in Figure 3.8, almost all of all respondents (87.9%) either *“Strongly Agreed”* or *“Agreed”*, with this

statement, with 9.2% feeling “Neutral” about the question. The remaining 2.9% either “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement, indicating that, with few exceptions, DVULI training had positively improved how graduates cared for their social needs.

Improved focus and intentionality. Graduates talked about changing and sharpening their priorities and becoming more aware of, and intentional regarding where they were going and how they were going to get there. The graduates commented on the dramatic ways in which their thought processes and time priorities had changed following DVULI training.

“Having down time allows us to actually dream about where our ministry is going, can go, might go, etc... it’s actually helped us refocus and stop trying to just keep everything running.”

“In keeping myself in balance I use my ministry time more effectively. I don’t feel scattered or overwhelmed as often. My time is more focused and intentional.”

“I am able to focus more and I am more affective, since I began devoting more attention to balancing all the areas of my life.”

Increased Time Spent with Family

The second minor theme is “Increased Time Spent with Family”. Graduates talked about coming to understand that family time is very important and is part of being balanced. Some of the graduates remarked that, even though they were doing good things, such activities sometimes built up family resentment and were not the best for their family’s health. A number of graduates commented that DVULI training saved their marriages, which were badly suffering from neglect due to primary focus on ministry concerns.

“It has affected my family more. I was putting the ministry first and they resented that. My eyes were opened by this program to see that while I was doing God’s work, I was seriously missing His more important work with my family.”

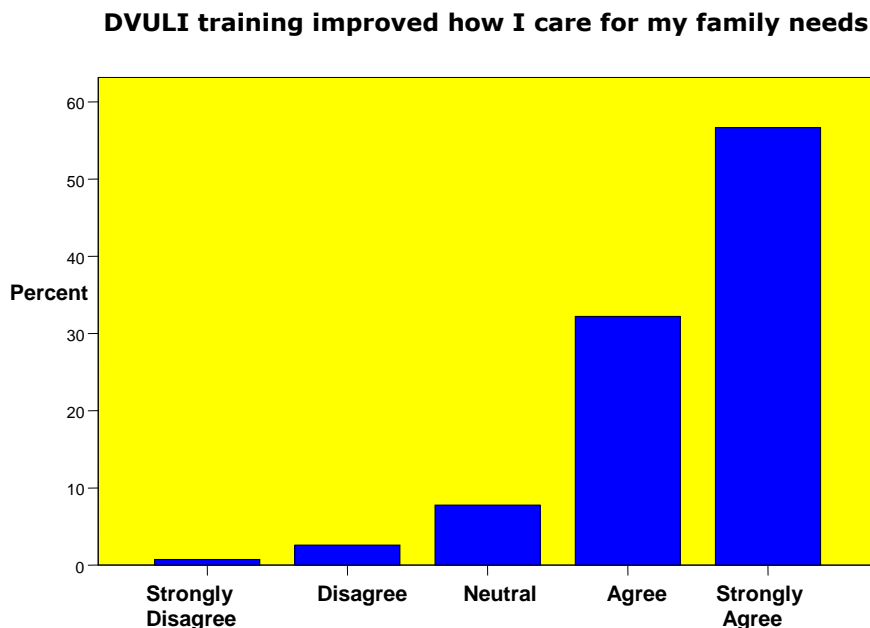
“My personal life was in total trouble with my wife and children. What this core value did was save my marriage and ministry!”

“Prior to my training, my time was fully occupied by the church and its ministry followed by my job, my family and then finally myself. The initiative has helped me to seek balance in all of those areas with my ministries starting point being my family! Thanks.”

The DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates the question “DVULI training improved how I care for my family needs.” As seen in Figure 3.9, a strong majority of all respondents (88.3%) either “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed”, with this statement, with 7.7% feeling “Neutral” about the question. The remaining 3.3% either “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” with this

statement, indicating that, with few exceptions, DVULI training had positively improved how graduates cared for their family needs.

FIGURE 3.9



Increased Time Spent with God

The third minor Balance theme is *“Increased Time Spent with God*. Participants described either more time spent with God or a change in the quality of that time as a result of DVULI training. Some of the graduates commented on things they learned about themselves and part of taking care of self is making sure that their spiritual life is growing.

“I now know how to keep myself in balance, which my spiritual walk comes first.”

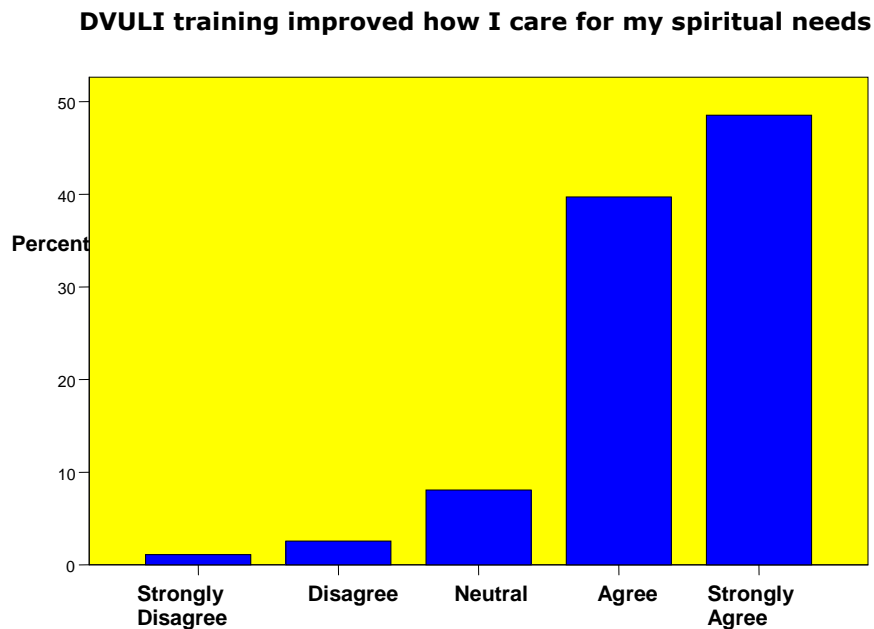
“Balance has affected my ministry in the sense that it affords me the time to be available for family and it allows me the opportunity to spend much needed time with the Lord, so that I may be effective in my personal life as well as my spiritual life.”

“Keeps God above all things.”

The DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates the question *“DVULI training improved how I care for my spiritual needs.”* As seen in Figure 3.10, almost all respondents (88.2%) either *“Strongly Agreed”* or *“Agreed”*, with this statement, with 8.1% feeling *“Neutral”* about the

question. The remaining 3.7% either “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement, indicating that, with few exceptions, DVULI training had positively improved how graduates cared for their spiritual needs.

FIGURE 3.10



Helps Other Core Values Fall into Place

The final minor Balance theme is “*Helps Other Core Values Fall into Place*”. Graduates commented that, while all of the core values enforce each other, Balance helps them to keep centered and allows all the other values to function more effectively.

“Balance is the foundation to everything that’s connected to my personal and spiritual life. I realized that if this core value is not prioritized above all else then all other core values systems are built on a fault line.”

“Without balance in my life I would work all the time. DVULI taught me how to recognize clues that identify imbalance as well as how to address it and why. This foundational value helps me to utilize the other core values.”

Focus Group Results

In addition to its dominance as the #1 ranked core value within the alumni survey results, Balance also emerged as the most discussed core value within the focus groups that were conducted across the nation. Of the total focus group responses related to core values (204 total), about 30% were related to Balance. Graduates who participated in the focus groups were asked: “Did your values or beliefs change as a result of the DVULI training? Give examples.” It was apparent through the focus group discussions that the graduates had become aware of the possible toll imbalance could have on their ministries, marriages and families, and personal lives. Throughout the responses, graduates’ described past ministry and family lives that were unstable, the inability to say “no” to projects before DVULI, and neglect of personal priorities in order to work for the ministry. Other graduates described a sense of guilt that surfaced prior to the DVULI training when they would attend to their own personal needs over ministry needs. These graduates now understand that it is not only healthy to care for themselves, but by caring for themselves, their ministries will also be positively impacted. DVULI brought the need for balance and a holistic approach to life to the forefront of graduates’ experiences. Because of the detailed analysis created by the Alumni Survey results described above, we have attempted to provide a flavor of comments from a number of different focus groups without attempting to further code these responses into more detailed categories.

“...I have been married 5 years into this part of the program and I think based on the values, it probably helped me reach my 10th anniversary. I started to pay much more attention to my family. My wife and I served together every day (she works here as well) but...our relationship was becoming very breakthrough driven and you couldn't really separate it much from the organization or kids who were a part of it and everything. So the values that were taught changed my attitudes towards family and being much more intentional....” ~Chicago

“... Being involved in DeVos Urban Leadership allowed me to be involved in some state-wide initiatives, some county-wide initiatives and to take the leadership that we developed in the inner city to another level. If I hadn't had that training I ... probably would have been too overwhelmed. The balance was the key thing. Even though I'm still out of balance I learned what to say 'no' to and to say 'yes' to, and to really say, ok I can take on some other additional leadership opportunities that would advance ministry....” ~Orlando

“I would say in my own personal life, balance, the balance in my personal life affected the balance I had in ministry and when I learned how to control my personal life, man, it was so much easier to control my ministry.” ~Denver

“It gave me permission to take care of myself. I thought that was self- centered and I thought it was wrong for a person in ministry to take care of themselves. To say 'no' to things, to take time to exercise, take time to read, take time to whatever, anything for me I thought that was selfish and wrong and that [the

Initiative] was the first thing that gave me permission to take care of myself.”
~Grand Rapids

“...[I] don't work 55 hours a week, so for me it set a good foundation for relationships and friendships and just having a real life outside of always being and doing something for somebody, 'cause it's important because you can't do it forever like that, maybe you'll get 2 years like that [before you burn out].”
~Philadelphia

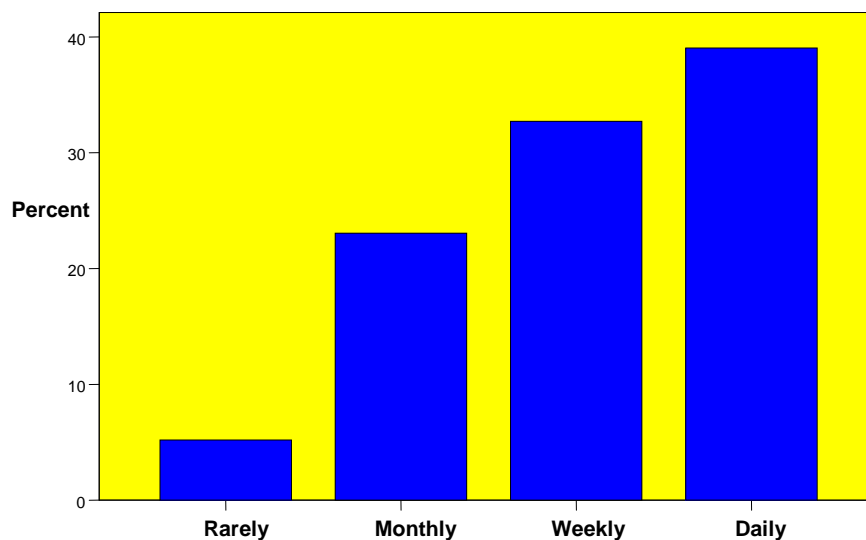
Accountability

As mentioned above, the second highest number of the participants (23.2%) chose Accountability as their #1 core value. Similarly, 20% of the comments in the DVULI Alumni Survey specifically mentioned Accountability in response to the question “*Briefly describe how your #1-ranked core value has affected your ministry*”.

As can be seen in Figure 3.11, in response to the question “*About how frequently do you practice accountability in your life and ministry?*”, 38.6% of all graduates responded “Daily”, with one-third (32.4%) responding “Weekly”.

FIGURE 3.11

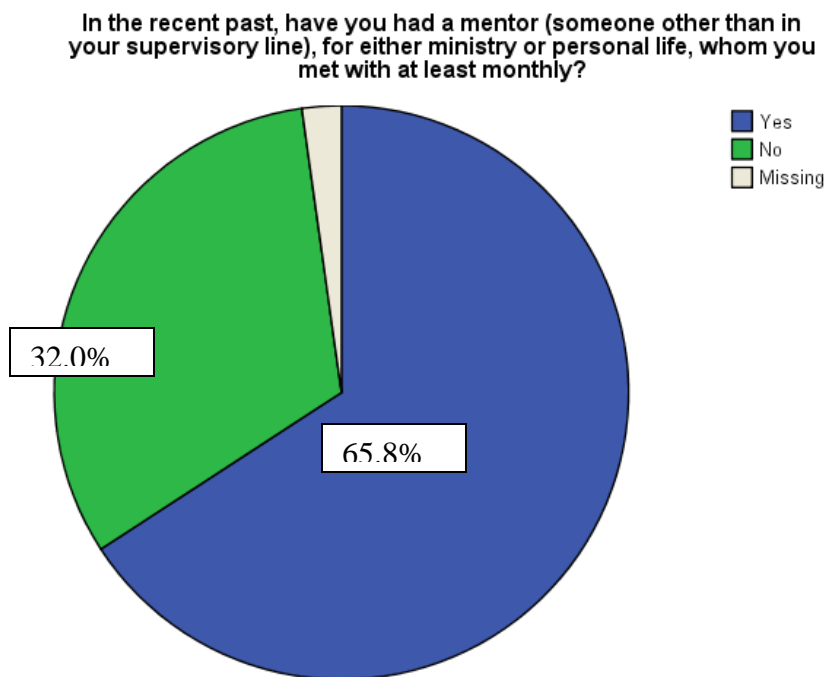
About how frequently do you practice Accountability in your life and ministry?



Almost one-fourth (22.8%) responded “*Monthly*”, with the remaining 5.1% responding “*Rarely*”. It is clear that this value continues to have a strong, ongoing impact on the lives of a strong majority of graduates (71%), who continue to incorporate this value into their lives on a daily or weekly basis.

In order to see how many graduates were regularly utilizing mentors to maintain their own personal accountability, the DVULI Alumni Survey asked “*In the recent past, have you had a mentor (someone other than in your supervisory line), for either ministry or personal life, whom you met with at least monthly?*” As can be seen in Figure 3.12, two-thirds (65.8%) of all respondents continue to meet with a mentor on at least a monthly basis, with the remaining one-third (32%) responding “*No*” to this question. Given the level of intimacy and transparency that this sort of relationship requires, it is perhaps surprising but very encouraging to see the high number of graduates who continue to practice the value of Accountability through mentoring on such a frequent basis. While it would be interesting and important to understand the reasons why some graduates no longer maintain a regular mentoring relationship, we did not ask this question in either our focus groups or our surveys.

FIGURE 3.12



The major theme of Accountability is also broken down into a number of minor themes.

Personal Life Impact

The first minor theme, 'Personal Life Impact', explores the way Accountability has affected the graduates' personal lives. Graduates discussed how this value helped them remain aware of their shortcomings, demonstrate responsibility and follow-through, and remain focused in priorities.

"Having more accountability has kept me aware and more connected to my propensities as a human being. What I know about myself is shared with someone else who can contact me and ask about areas of my life that must no longer be kept secret."

"One of the things people judge you by is accountability and I have noticed people will support my ministry when they see accountability."

"Accountability is the key to staying focused and on track."

Effect on Ministry/Work/Leadership

The second minor theme, 'Effect on Ministry/Work/Leadership', discusses the value of Accountability in the areas of ministry and leadership in general. Graduates discussed how Accountability made them more efficient, helped them clarify priorities, and manage their time more effectively.

"Accountability has allowed me to be more efficient in ministry."

"It helped my husband and I reach a decision to seek out a different church in which to worship and serve."

"The core value of accountability has affected my ministry in which I made priority decisions, preparation of programs and time management of my personal and professional schedule."

Integrity

For some graduates, the key to accountability lies in their personal integrity. For some, this means being faithful stewards of God's resources. For many respondents, the idea of integrity was backed by trying to be transparent and vulnerable in their interactions with others.

"The core value of accountability has enabled me to continue to operate and interact with others in a transparent mode of integrity. I strive to apply this value in all manners of my personal life. I encourage others that I have selected to hold me accountable in all of my actions and words. Holding me accountable has

forced me to do things differently in my ministry and accomplish goals and objectives.”

“We are a private non-profit so people’s trust is the first place we start. So in our personal and ministry lives being as transparent as we can be as humans is very high, to live and do ministry in the community.”

“Accountability has played an integral part in my daily work, because it has helped me be a better steward with what God has given me. Family, career, church.”

Helps Other Core Values Fall Into Place

In the final minor theme, ‘Helps Other Core Values Fall into Place’, graduates described how Accountability is an organizing value that helps keep them grounded in their priorities and allows all the other values to function more effectively. Similar to comments found in the Balance value, practicing this value helps other values fall into place. Some graduates also noted that practicing Accountability has helped their groups become more cohesive, genuine, and helped them develop a closer support system.

“Accountability has, in my opinion, brought the groups I’m involved in closer as we continually discover the significance of all involved and therefore giving the confidence to empower and eventually mature together for God’s glory.”

“Even though I am not employed full time in ministry I see my current employment, volunteer efforts, service in church, and life as a ministry. Accountability is essential to my staying spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally balanced. Accountability helps me apply all of the core values to my ministry. Accountability is essential to me as I am reminded that I do not, nor cannot, operate by myself in this world. I have developed accountability to God and with an outstanding support system through friendships and my church small group.”

“My ministry has been strengthened and stretched as a result of my accountability to God, myself, my family, and others. As a result I do not think about accountability - it is now embedded in me, which gives me the freedom to embrace the other core values in a way that give a greater meaning, structure, and organization to my ministry, which in turn becomes a trickling affect as those around me catch the vision and see the importance of being accountable. What might seem to be a simple concept has the ability to transform and transcend individuals and organizations in a way that seems hopeless. I have found that the foundation of my ministry was strengthened from the inside out. When others know that you are real and can be trusted half of the battle has been conquered.”

"Accountability is an aspect that is lacking in the church structure that I work in. Following the training I personally set goals for myself in this area and I have stuck with it. I try daily to hold myself accountable in all areas of my life and ministry. It has fostered greater balance in my life. I have gained respect from my peers and from my leadership and from the people I minister with."

Focus Group Results

Graduates who participated in the various focus groups also discussed Accountability as a core value that significantly impacted their ministries following the DVULI trainings. About 11% of the total responses related to changes in core values were focused on the developed sense of appreciation for mentors, local DVULI peer groups, and the acquired ability to disclose their vulnerabilities to peers, churches, and their other ministries who could hold them accountable. It was evident that the graduates developed an understanding of the need to seek feedback and guidance from peers and share their plans with others in order to learn from them and to benefit from the cognitive and emotional process of having to answer to them. Graduates also expressed an appreciation for the emphasis on self-care presented throughout the DVULI trainings and use that as a standard to compare themselves to.

"Accountability was important. ...prior to the Initiative, I had a lot of mentors, but nobody that I met with on regular basis for accountability, where you give permission to speak truth no matter how much it hurts. I never had that. Since the Initiative, and since I've continued to have it, not only do I have that, but I'm that for three other individuals, so that [concept] really hit home as being important." ~Albuquerque

"One of the specific things that stands out, one of the many, is the accountability piece. And the importance that I learned of instead of being the lone ranger, being able to be connected to other people, to be held accountable - that really impacted my life. To be able to open up to someone else and tell them you know, no holds barred, what is going on. It took me a while to actually do that." ~Grand Rapids

"... I would say for me it made me more accountable with my children and as a youth minister I found that I was spending more time with the youth of church versus my own children. So that was a big wake-up call for me, because I found that I was repeating a cycle that my father, who was also a pastor, had done before me. ...I think the initiative showed that and helped bring that to me." ~Houston

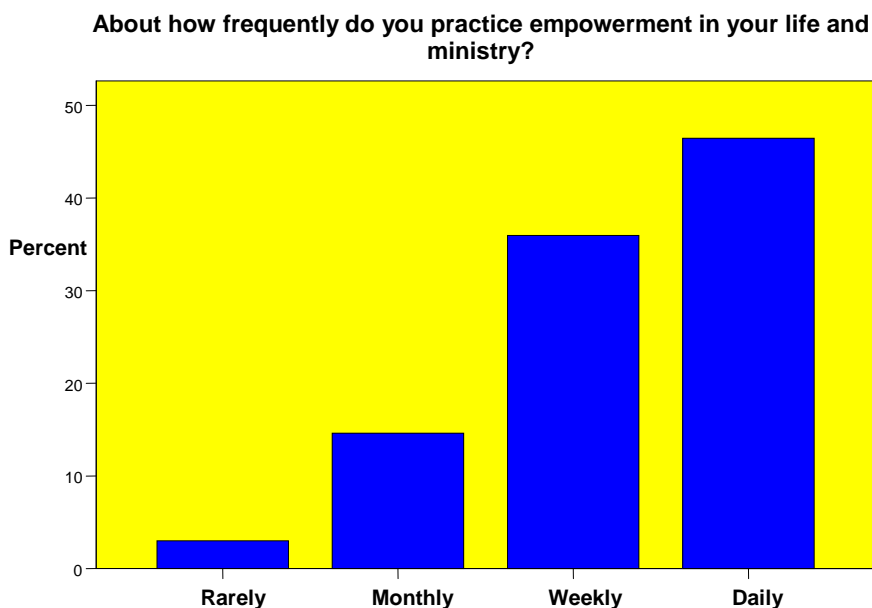
"... It taught us to be a community. It really taught us to really be a community..." ~Grand Rapids

Empowerment

The third highest number of the participants (12.9%) chose Empowerment as their #1 core value. A similar response pattern was seen in the percentage of graduates who wrote positive comments about Empowerment in the DVULI Alumni Survey question “*Briefly describe how your #1-ranked core value has affected your ministry*”, with 14% of all comments relating to Empowerment in some way.

As can be seen in Figure 3.13, in response to the question “*About how frequently do you practice empowerment in your life and ministry?*”, almost half (45.6%) of all graduates responded “*Daily*”, with over one-third (35.3%) responding “*Weekly*”. Less than one-sixth (14.3%) responded “*Monthly*”, with the remaining 2.9% responding “*Rarely*”. Clearly, a strong majority of graduates (80.9%) continue to incorporate this value into their lives on a daily or weekly basis, leading us to conclude that graduates have planted this value deeply into their daily lives and ministries.

FIGURE 3.13



A variety of minor themes emerged in graduates’ comments, including increased efficiency and effectiveness of ministry, as well as the individual impact that Empowerment had on their own and others’ lives.

Increased Ministry Efficiency & Effectiveness

The first minor theme, 'Increased Ministry Efficiency and Effectiveness' describes how graduates can accomplish so much more when they practice the value of Empowerment. Some of the graduates described developing new leaders, empowering their employees or coworkers, and even empowering other leaders in their ministry.

"I need to be about developing people at every level and therefore empowerment needs to permeate me. I am trying to develop leaders so that ministry work can be replicated."

"Empowerment is the key to ministry effectiveness, results, and long term viability."

"The ministry of ____ has opened satellite branches in three different areas in the last three years! Most of our programs are volunteer led versus "Eddie" led. It has allowed me to tell the story with energy. I have truly become the leader servant."

Impact on Others

The second minor theme, 'Impact on Others', includes comments regarding what the graduates have been doing to empower others. Graduates were excited to find that empowerment was life-changing in that those who were empowered became more self-reliant and self-confident of their own abilities.

"The fact that I regularly seek to empower others to ministry and help them be successful in reaching their visions and goals is what keeps our work growing and flourishing."

"I have found that through empowerment I can do more than just teach a principle; I can change a life by encouraging application and follow through."

"I have been able to better see people's potential in Christ and help them reach their potential. Instead of doing things for them, I teach them to do things for themselves, in collaboration with others if necessary, to be able to do more and overcome their learned helplessness."

Personal Life Impact

In the third minor theme, 'Personal Life Impact', graduates described how they were personally transformed by the core value of empowerment. Graduates described how empowerment fostered self-understanding, self-confidence, and a sense of energy and freedom at not having to do everything themselves.

“Firstly, I feel more confident in my ability to lead without the pressure to be in control of every detail of the work. Secondly, leadership without a legacy is destined to death. I enjoy watching others grow or discovering their own ability to lead. Lastly, the more I delegate, the more our youth and staff grow and the more freedom I have for other things.”

“Empowerment nurtured growth and endless possibilities for my ministry! Ministry leaders feel empowered to do God’s work based on their call, gifts, and talents. The ministry transitioned into a comprehensive form of service that met the diverse needs of the people we serve. Without empowerment my ministry was less energetic and bound by my restrictions and my limits. I believe without empowerment, ministry workers tend to give less and feel less appreciated along with taking on a ‘clones’ approach to ministry instead of a personal approach to ministry.”

“It has taken a great load off of me. I can relinquish some of the responsibilities to those individuals and allow them to complete the task. This has given me a sense of peace and freedom.”

Helps Other Core Values Fall into Place

In this final minor theme, the graduates believed that practicing the value of empowerment helped all of the other core values fall into place.

“Empowerment in the ministry allows the flow of the others – without empowerment is hard to ask balance and/or accountability questions.”

“Empowerment has allowed me to recognize the small opportunities that are around me everyday. Opportunities to build people and share the load that I had previously carried alone. This has led to the use of more values in my life - things such as Interdependence, Leverage, and Balance.”

Focus Group Results

Like the Alumni Survey responses, graduates who participated in the focus groups also described Empowerment as having a lasting impact on their ministries. Close to 21% of the total responses that were related to core values were specifically related to Empowerment and described changes that resulted within their ministries, such as allowing others to take the lead. Graduates described the personal benefits of choosing to empower others to develop their own leadership abilities. Delegation was a skill that had been lacking but the graduates themselves were empowered to relinquish some of the responsibility as a result of participating in the DVULI trainings.

“With me it was empowerment. Because I didn't have anybody else besides my wife, maybe one or two people sporadically helping me. And with holding a full-time job and doing youth ministry part time it was way, way tough but after empowering some people to come along and actually giving them ‘this is what I need you to do, this is your area, you handle it, I ain't gonna be all over your shoulder or whatever’. And when they felt ownership of that part of the youth ministry, now it ... frees me up to do more.” ~Houston

“I think it made me a more effective leader because, as we tend to do, instead of trying to run out in front and put my hand on everything and touch everything and direct everything and guide everything, I became a more effective leader as a result of seeing that that was not what was required of me, but a better leader was one that was able to empower those around them in order to help the success of the team move forward.” ~Houston

“I just feel like my role ... is empowering me. That's what I do: I help empower people so I've been able to work more vigorously, more self confidence, in my assignment or my section or my role.” ~Indianapolis

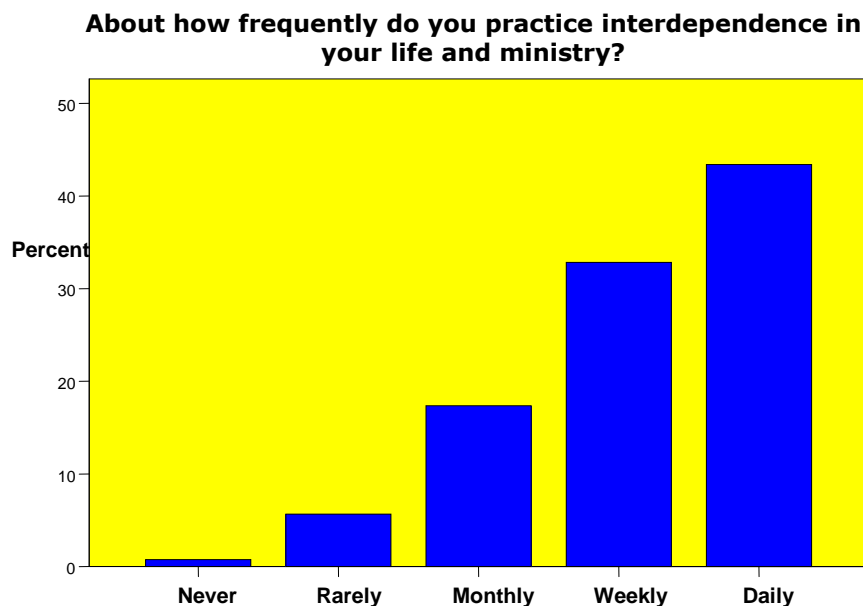
“For me, when I started DeVos, I knew that it was wrong to be doing everything and not empowering volunteers to be doing things, but I didn't see how to make that transition happen, so as a result now, on our weekly program, I could be there or not be there. I need to set foundation every week and be there to encourage, but I don't have a task I'm supposed to do and that's kind of flowed out in all of the other projects. But I guess DeVos, for me, affirmed something I knew should be happening and gave me the motivation to put it in place and to trust someone else to do the job as good as me.” ~Philadelphia

Interdependence

A relatively small percentage of the participants (11%) chose Interdependence as their #1 core value. Similarly, 10% of the comments in the DVULI Alumni Survey specifically mentioned Interdependence in response to the question *“Briefly describe how your #1-ranked core value has affected your ministry”*.

As can be seen in Figure 3.14, in response to the question *“About how frequently do you practice interdependence in your life and ministry?”*, 42.3% of all graduates responded *“Daily”*, with one-third (32%) responding *“Weekly”*. Almost one-fourth (16.9%) responded *“Monthly”*, with 6.2% responding *“Rarely”* or *“Never”*. Consistent with the other values, Interdependence is practiced on a daily or weekly basis by a large majority (74.3%) of the graduates. Again, this would appear to indicate that graduates are comfortable with the integration of this value into their daily work and ministries.

FIGURE 3.14



A core element of Interdependence is the appreciation of, and reliance on others that graduates must have in order to achieve greater effectiveness in their lives and ministries. From their comments, it is clear that the graduates have moved from self-reliance to now relying heavily on the people within their ministry teams to help them in their projects and tasks. Graduates mentioned that, without their team, it would not be possible for them to succeed in the Lord's work. That success comes from shared goals and responsibilities.

"Before DeVos I was an island unto myself. I have learned to need and appreciate the importance of the minds and hearts of others."

"Realizing that I am not a lone ranger. My gifts are great, but I'm not perfect! I NEED to team with others who have differing gifts and divergent perspectives in order to accomplish OUR vision."

"I have been convinced that I can't do what the Lord has me to do without the collaboration of others. I personally am depleted if I try to do it on my own. As I work with a national perspective, it is all the more necessary for me to use my interdependence relationships to leverage my organization's strengths so that the youth and their families are best cared for and served."

A variety of minor themes also emerged in graduates' comments, including personal life impact, changes in ministry effectiveness and impact, working toward common goals, and the importance of a shared community.

Personal Life Impact

In the first minor theme, 'Personal Life Impact', graduates described how they were personally transformed by the core value of Interdependence. Graduates described how interdependence fostered self-understanding and improved their ability to be a better person in multiple life roles.

"To realize the impact of my behavior on others and the future of the organization I work in has been a big eye opener for me. I realize every move, every decision, every direction I move affects my work, my family, and my spiritual connections. It is all connected."

"I am learning how to be patient and work with others to achieve our goals."

"I realize that I can be a better person, minister, husband and friend when I apply all five core values. But for now, interdependence is key for me. I'm about to get thrust into a ministry on a more demanding scale so I need to be aware of my weaknesses."

Changes in Ministry Efficiency & Impact

In the second minor theme, 'Changes in Ministry Efficiency & Impact', graduates described how Interdependence has helped broaden their impact across other organizations in the community. Interdependence builds mutual trust, support, and a realization that the different parts of the Body of Christ all build toward the shared goal of creating increased impact of their ministry.

"Consulting and cooperating with other para-church, church, and mission organizations has made our organization more efficient and effective. We are able to learn from and encourage each other. Learning from each other about what we are doing right and wrong helps each group be more effective in their ministry."

"Our mission has somewhat shifted to focus more on specific groups (i.e. males, females, teenagers) and ministering to them individually as it pertains to the family as a whole."

"In every aspect of my ministry I am thinking about how to partner with others in order to increase the impact. I know that serving in the inner-city has to be an interdependent relationship. We need to have a teachable spirit and have so much to learn from one another. Assessing the assets and needs of a community is vital. Blessing and being equally blessed is simply a result of ministering in the inner-city. There can be no lone-rangers. We need the entire body of Christ."

Working toward Common Goals

In the third minor theme, 'Working toward Common Goals', graduates discussed the importance of cooperation toward goals and the impact that such collaborations had on their ministries.

"I have learned the key to long term success is through successful partnerships with similarly goaled people and organizations. True relationships are built on solid trust = interdependence."

"This core value has given me the challenge to set goals (personal and ministry) and allow others the ability to speak into those goals. It has grown my relationships and challenged spoken goals in a way that allows me the possibility to grow and dream bigger."

"The core value of interdependence affected my ministry because before taking the training there was a lot of confusion due to each department working independently of one another while drawing from the same resource pool. As a result of the training, we were able to create systems whereby conversations could be had which allowed for healthy cooperation. There is now a growing sense of support and common direction."

Importance of Shared Community

In the final minor theme, 'Importance of Shared Community', graduates discussed the importance of a shared community that fostered accountability between members of the community and deepened and reflected the image of God.

"I'm growing in my understanding of the importance of a shared community in all aspects of ministry, especially as it relates to educating the church, staff and members so we have an understanding of what it means to be the community of faith and how community reflects the nature/image of God..."

"Before DeVos I operated on this model 'If you want something done right, do it yourself.' It bred burn-out, sin, loneliness, and pride. It is one of the things I teach and preach often. I know I am part of a whole and I also know that I need the rest

of the body to serve God and man. After a moral failure two years ago, I was never alone because the body came to rescue me. I am confident that without it I would not even be alive. That, my friend, is why I exist... for the whole."

"I greatly depend on God and even though he does not need me we have a connection that causes us to be dependent on each other. Likewise, I am dependent upon my sisters and brothers within and without the faith to champion the present and future. Interdependence is the key for me in how we become and sustain victory."

Focus Group Results

Like the alumni survey responses, graduates' responses related to the impact of embracing interdependence as a core value addressed the benefits of collaboration, sharing common goals, and developing healthy relationships within the community. Graduates' ministries were impacted positively as a result of collaborating with others and seeking out resources that existed within their personal and ministry networks. About 13% of the total focus group responses relating to core values were specifically related to interdependence.

"That whole piece about interdependence was extremely important to me too because, its kind of like the old saying, 'if you want job done, do it yourself'... and I've done a lot of 'do it myself' and so going through Initiative really helped me to see the importance of interdependence and really involving other people. The Apostle Paul says, 'be all things, be all people', but the truth of the matter is, I don't [have] all of the skills to be everything to other people. Some people have skills that I don't have and the Initiative helped drive that home for me."

~Albuquerque

"I think on a personal level anyway, the idea of interdependence comes to mind. This last year particularly, my life has been chaos or hell or however I want to describe it. It would be real easy to have just moved off into isolation, but made a conscious effort to interact with people. This whole idea of interdependence kept coming back into my mind. As I look back this last year, about a month ago, I started making a list of people that were supportive and I interacted with and there was probably over 50 people through this time that somehow or another came around to support me through what I've been going through. And it was a conscious effort, at least in part. I'll give DeVos credit for reminding me that I need to be interdependent with people." ~Chicago

"At times I had an organization called Urban Impact, ...under a guy named _____, and he was a good friend of mine at the time, but things changed. Through DeVos, I basically learned that interdependence and values was really strong, and one of the women in our class ... had an organization and we basically just merged our two entities together, so that was a big piece and a big

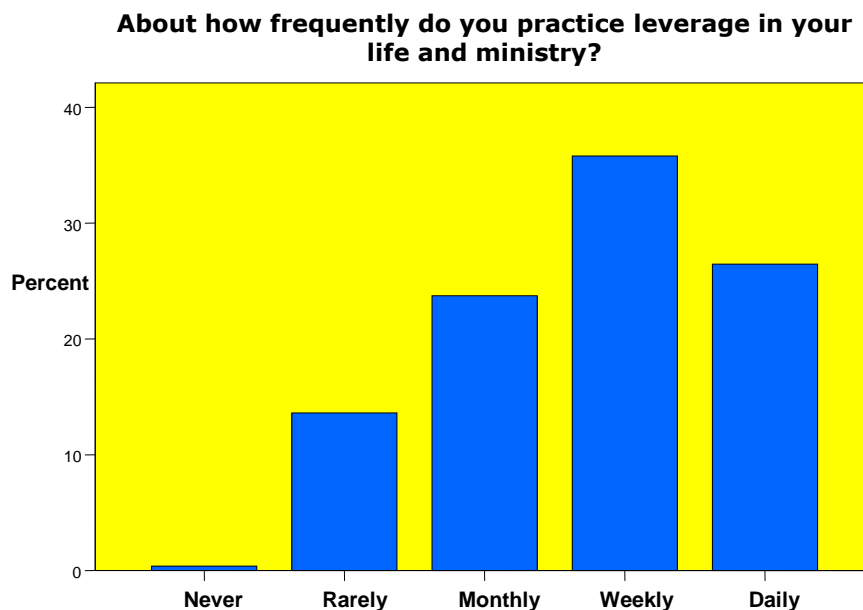
impact in my life. It taught me just about changes, interdependence, balance, and the whole nine yards.” ~Denver

“And then the interdependence ... we didn't necessarily have the training before because of the way the church was set up to know how to really use ministry. We just did it as the Spirit led and the best we knew how. But through the program, I was able to get resources from other people that have done it, that can tell me ‘OK, this is how you may start, you may not go this path, you know continue this path, but this is a way to get started’. So I believe that the relationships and realizing that I don't have to be everything and know everything, but if I know someone who knows, it's as good as me knowing. And so for me that was very, very much of a life change for me.” ~Houston

Leverage

The lowest number of the participants (5.1%) chose Leverage as their #1 core value. Looked at differently, over three-fourths of all graduates ranked Leverage as their last or second-to-last value in terms of importance to their life and ministry. As can be seen in Figure 3.15, in response to the question “*About how frequently do you practice leverage in your life and ministry?*”, one-fourth (25%) of all graduates responded “*Daily*”, with another third (33.8%) answering “*Weekly*”. Approximately one-fourth (22.4%) responded “*Monthly*”, with the remaining 12.9% responding “*Rarely*”. However, in spite of this being the lowest-ranked value, well over half of the graduates (58.8%) still continue to incorporate this value into their lives on a daily or weekly basis. This is a reasonably strong maintenance rate, particularly since Leverage is somewhat more abstract than the other values and may not be as easy or as possible to practice on a regular basis. However, compared with the other values, the relatively lower rates of practice of this value lead us to conclude that graduates may not have planted Leverage as deeply as the other four values.

FIGURE 3.15



Because this core value was chosen by very few participants (only 10 people in total), there were very few themes that we could identify for this category. Most of the comments in this area related to the impact of Leverage on gaining resources for ministry survival and growth. Some graduates have attempted to teach the kids in their youth ministries the importance of this value, linking Leverage to giving back to the community. When communities see how much the youth care, they respond by supporting the ministry and the kids. As a result, both the community and the ministry benefit from this interaction.

“The ability to leverage relationships and resources has enabled this ministry to survive and begin growing. Without leverage the ministry would be defunct by now.”

“I teach my kids to give back to the community by doing projects to gain leverage with community, which includes schools, churches, and helping a home for the elderly. And everyone loves the kid way of giving back and out....”

“I have found that this core value of leverage has benefited my ministry a lot, by collaborating with others and using their strengths and experience, combined with mine, we have been able to get a lot of things accomplished with limited resources.”

“The ability to leverage resources and become mutually beneficial to ministries.”

Focus Group Results

Like the alumni survey results, Leverage was the least mentioned core value as focus group participants discussed the impact of implementing the core values within their ministries. Of the total responses, close to 9% were related to Leverage. As graduates discussed this topic, it was evident that some had embraced the idea of "...seek[ing] out strategic opportunities to create healthy, sustainable change" while others worked to position their ministries and themselves in a visible position within their communities and spheres of influence. Some provided services to others and as a result believed that not only were they known within the community but were in the position of receiving a trade of services.

"The values - did any values change? I think leverage – how to leverage relationships. I think that the DeVos process really opened my eyes to look for other possibilities – how to work relationships with the board, fundraising."
~Chicago

"One of the core values that played into that community capacity was the leverage of us being able to run a summer youth program out of this center. We had kids that were going throughout the neighborhoods, picking up trash, painting, doing things that were impossible. It gave us that leverage, not just with community but the stores, the pizza places, the school. I volunteer at the school 30 hours a week at least, so I'm there as a volunteer security officer. It's pretty intense what happens there, 'cause it's a block and a half away and I just thank God that the church is the network, the church is the community. It's like, if you do something for them, they're always going to be there for you when you need them. I go to pastor Phil and I ask him, 'I got a lady whose water is shut off, can you help her out?' You know, right away, they don't even question, they write the check. It's leverage, and that's how we gain that leverage and I thank God for that...." ~Denver

"Leverage, leverage, leverage, leverage. I'm loving leverage. I think the leverage in the interdependence piece, when I'm trying to do a ministry on my job as well as at the church. It goes such a long way and it's not necessarily what you are getting or what you receive, results of what you can put back...." How you do something but you don't even realize this is what you are doing? You know you just kind of stumble upon it. Well, to be able to recognize this is what it is or how you take it to the next level and keep building upon that. Leverage has been a blessing." ~Indianapolis

"Definitely leverage was a key for me because I came into a ministry situation where most of the conversation was what we didn't have at the time and we couldn't accomplish certain goals because we didn't have anything, we didn't have this, we didn't have that...and not looking at the assets. So the concept of leverage really awakened something in me in terms of, 'OK, what do we have and how can [we] use what God has already given us to be able to find out what His

will is for this particular ministry'? So out of all the values I'm still out of balance (laughing) but leverage." ~Orlando

Summary

By an overwhelming margin, graduates believed that DVULI training had helped them to identify and act in harmony with their core values. Graduates ranked Balance as more than twice as important to themselves and their ministry than any other value. Graduates ranked Accountability second in terms of importance, followed by Empowerment and Interdependence, with roughly equal rankings in terms of importance. Graduates ranked Leverage as least important of the five values. Most graduates continued to practice these values on a daily or weekly basis, with less practice of those values that were ranked as least important.

Graduates described the importance of Balance by discussing its importance to their personal and ministry lives. Eighty-six percent of graduates continued to practice this value on a daily or weekly basis. They felt that practicing Balance had helped them achieve better self-care, improved time management, improved peace of mind, burnout prevention, setting clearer boundaries, and improved focus and intentionality of their efforts. Balance also helped them increase their time spent with family and God. It was described as a major key in helping the other core values fall into place.

Two-thirds of graduates continued to practice Accountability by continuing to meet with their mentor on at least a monthly basis. They believed that practicing Accountability had helped them to remain aware of their shortcomings, demonstrate responsibility and follow-through, and remain focused in priorities in their personal lives. They discussed how Accountability made them more efficient, helped them clarify priorities, and manage their time more effectively in their ministries. For many, the key to Accountability was centered in personal integrity. For some, this meant being faithful stewards of God's resources. For others, the idea of integrity was backed by trying to be transparent and vulnerable in their interactions with others. Finally, similar to Balance, graduates described how Accountability was an organizing value that helped keep them grounded in their priorities and helped all the other values to function more effectively.

A strong majority of graduates (80.9%) continued to practice Empowerment into their lives on a daily or weekly basis. They described increased efficiency and effectiveness in their ministries as they developing new leaders, empowering their employees or coworkers, and even empowering other leaders in their ministry. They were excited to find that Empowerment was life-changing in that those who were empowered became more self-reliant and self-confident of their own abilities. Graduates also described how Empowerment fostered self-understanding, self-confidence, and a sense of energy and freedom at not having to do everything themselves.

Interdependence was practiced on a daily or weekly basis by a large majority (74%) of the graduates. It was clear that the graduates had moved from self-reliance to now relying heavily on the people within their ministry teams to help them in their projects and tasks. Graduates mentioned that, without their team, it would not be possible for them to succeed in the Lord's work. On a personal level, interdependence fostered self-understanding and improved their ability to be a better person in multiple life roles. In their ministries, they described how Interdependence had helped broaden their impact across other organizations in the community by building mutual trust, support, and a realization that the different parts of the Body of Christ all build toward the shared goal of creating increased impact in their communities. Finally, graduates discussed the importance of a shared community that fostered accountability between members of the community and deepened and reflected the image of God.

Although Leverage was the lowest-ranked value, well over half of the graduates (59%) still continue to incorporate this value into their lives on a daily or weekly basis. This is a reasonably strong maintenance rate, particularly since Leverage is somewhat more abstract than the other values and may not be as easy or as possible to practice on a regular basis. As noted earlier, because this core value was chosen by very few participants (only 10 people in total), there were very few themes that we could identify for this category. Most of the comments in this area related to the impact of Leverage on gaining resources for ministry survival and growth. Some graduates had attempted to teach the kids in their youth ministries the importance of this value, linking Leverage to giving back to the community, while others worked to position their ministries and themselves in a visible position within their communities and spheres of influence. As a result, they not only were known within the community but were in the position to trade services because they had helped others out with their projects.

Graduates' responses clearly showed that most respondents continued to practice the core values on a regular basis. DVULI staff can be confident that training around core values positively changed the way the majority of graduates behaved in relation to both their personal lives and ministries.

Chapter 4

Changes in Breakthrough Skills

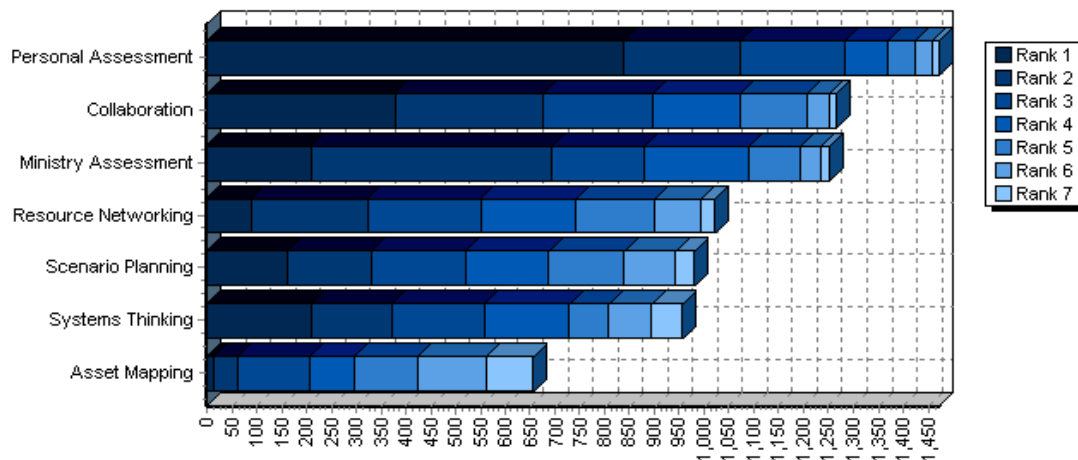
Seven Breakthrough Skills were included in the DVULI Alumni Survey, reflecting skills that were commonly presented across each year of the DVULI curriculum (acknowledging that curriculum content may have been introduced differently or stressed to varying degrees over the course of the trainings). Training in these knowledge and skill areas was not designed to increase participants' skills as managers, but rather to improve their effectiveness as leaders. As such, the focus of this skill training was two-fold: "to deepen participant understanding of effective leadership, and to challenge their thinking in key areas of personal and professional performance relating to avoiding breakdown and achieving breakthrough (p. 2, DVULI Program Content handout)." The key knowledge and skill components include:

- 1) Personal Assessment. This skill involves learning how to both give and receive feedback by creating safe places where participants can "seek the truth together in love". Participants become skilled at providing feedback to each other, as well as being able to engage in effective problem solving together. Participants learn to apply a variety of self-assessment and communication tools designed to enhance leadership.
- 2) Collaboration. Participants gain the ability to "work together productively with other like-minded people". They learn to engage others in a process to produce long lasting benefits and results. Participants learn to plan, establish, manage, and transition successful collaborative initiatives within their communities.
- 3) Ministry Assessment. This set of skills helps participants to evaluate their own ministry effectiveness and strengths. The Ministry Assessment model addresses strategy, capacity, and relationships as participants learn to understand and modify their ministry to increase impact in the community.
- 4) Resource Networking. This set of skills helps participants become more creative in finding, accessing, and mobilizing resources within their community. Participants learn to "identify sources, make their case, and build ongoing, mutually-beneficial resource partnerships".
- 5) Scenario Planning. Participants learn to recognize the "importance of preparing for the future, especially in times of turbulent change and significant unknowns". This planning approach anticipates possible future challenges and opportunities. Participants learn to develop action strategies that increase the chance of future success across a range of possible circumstances as well as build capacity to respond effectively to future changes.

- 6) Systems Thinking. These skills help participants understand the underlying causes of problems by looking at the bigger picture on a systems level. Participants learn to use the tools of Systems Thinking to “accomplish significant, sustainable, strategic change”.
- 7) Asset Mapping. Participants learn to appreciate, identify, measure, and develop the richness of resources and assets within their community. The focus shifts from the community’s deficits to the community’s strengths. As a result, participants are able to develop programs that are a better fit with the community’s strengths, thus developing community capacity. They are also taught how to prepare youth for future leadership roles.

The DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates to rank the Breakthrough Skills from first (1) to last (7) in terms of importance to themselves and their ministry. As can be seen in Figure 4.1, graduates ranked Personal Assessment as more than twice as important as any other skill. Collaboration was seen as the second-most important skill, with Ministry Assessment and Systems Thinking virtually tied for third place. However, Ministry Assessment was chosen as the largest *second-ranked* Breakthrough Skill. Resource Networking received the second-to-lowest ranking in terms of ministry importance. Finally, almost no one chose Asset Mapping as their most important Breakthrough Skill. It is perhaps important to note that all seven of the Breakthrough Skills may not have been taught to all cohorts or remained in the same format with all cohorts. This would likely change the outcomes for the rankings for this section.

FIGURE 4.1



To understand the extent to which these Breakthrough Skills were actually practiced on a regular basis, the graduates were next asked to identify *how often* they practiced each of the skills in their lives and ministries. Findings are as follows (see Table 4.1), with red numbers indicating the highest percentage for each skill:

TABLE 4.1

About how frequently do you <u>practice</u> these skills in your life and ministry?	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Personal Assessment	0.4	10.0	33.3	28.9	27.4
Collaboration	0.7	7.1	31.8	33.3	27.0
Ministry Assessment	1.5	15.4	47.7	27.1	8.3
Resource Networking	1.1	14.2	36.0	30.0	18.7
Scenario Planning	1.9	28.3	37.9	20.1	11.9
Systems Thinking	1.9	23.8	31.5	23.1	19.6
Asset Mapping	7.8	40.7	37.6	10.5	3.5

Personal Assessment . More than a quarter (27.4%) of the graduates stated that they practiced Personal Assessment on a daily basis, while 28.9% practiced it on a weekly basis. One-third (33.3%) of the graduates stated that they practiced Personal Assessment on a monthly basis. Very few stated that they either rarely (10%) or never (0.4%) practiced Personal Assessment.

Collaboration. A total of 27% of the graduates stated that they practiced Collaboration on a daily basis, while 33.3% practiced it every week. Another third (31.8%) stated they practiced Collaboration on a monthly basis, with fewer saying that they either rarely (7.1%) or never (0.4%) did.

Ministry Assessment. Very few (8.3%) graduates stated that they practiced Ministry Assessment on a daily basis, while 27.1% stated they practiced it on a weekly basis. Almost half (47.7%) of the graduates stated they practiced this skill on a monthly basis, but very few either rarely (7.1%) or never (1.5%) did.

Systems Thinking . One-fifth (19.6%) of the graduates stated that they practiced Systems Thinking on a daily basis, while 20.1% practiced it on a weekly basis. The highest percent (31.5%) of the graduates stated that they practiced Systems Thinking on a monthly basis and almost a quarter (23.8%) either rarely or never (1.9%) practiced it.

Scenario Planning . A total of 11.9% of the graduates stated that they practiced Scenario Planning on a daily basis and 20.1% of them stated that they practiced it on a weekly basis. The highest percent (37.9%) practiced it on a monthly basis, with fewer either rarely (28.3%) or never (1.9%) practicing this skill in their lives and ministries.

Resource Networking . A total of 18.7% of the graduates stated they practiced Resource Networking on a daily basis, while almost twice as many of the graduates (30%) practiced it on a weekly basis. The highest percentage (36%) practiced Resource Networking on a monthly basis, while very few either rarely (14.2%) or never (1.1%) practiced this skill in their personal lives and ministries.

Asset Mapping. Very few (3.5%) of the graduates stated that they practiced Asset Mapping on a daily basis, while 10.5% of them practiced this skill on a weekly basis. Over one-third (37.6%) practiced it on a monthly basis, with very few either rarely (4.7%) or never (7.8%) practicing this skill.

The DVULI Alumni Survey next asked graduates to answer the following question in sentence form: *“Briefly describe how your #1-ranked breakthrough skill above has affected your ministry.”* Each major response was coded within the seven major skill themes and one additional miscellaneous theme. Sub-themes were described as they emerged from the coding process (please refer to the “Data analysis methods” section of this report for further details on the coding process). Many of the graduates’ responses contained multiple topics and thus were coded in multiple themes generating a total of 257 individual comments. Skills are first discussed in general terms, followed by the minor themes and sub-themes that emerged through the process of coding graduates’ responses. The following section begins with the highest ranked skill in terms of importance to graduates, followed by the next highest ranked skill and so on. Each skill is further defined in terms of the total percentage of graduates by rank position. Two to three representative quotes from the alumni survey are used to illustrate major and minor themes and sub-themes that relate to the impact of each Breakthrough Skill on graduates’ ministries.

Personal Assessment

As mentioned above, the largest percentage of graduates (44.3%) chose Personal Assessment as their #1-ranked breakthrough skill. A similarly strong preference for this breakthrough skill was seen in the percentage of comments from graduates who answered the DVULI Alumni Survey question: *“Briefly describe how your #1-ranked breakthrough skill above has affected your ministry.”* Of the graduates’ total responses, 56.4% specifically discussed Personal Assessment skills, resulting in the largest major theme. In addition, the following

minor themes emerged as a result of the analysis: 1) self inventory, 2) ministry assessment, 3) impact on leadership, 4) impact on ministry, and 5) impact on decision making. Some of the general comments related to the impact of Personal Assessment include:

“For me personal assessment is just that, it begins with me. If my attitude isn't right with the Lord, it can't be right with my family or others.”

“The time spent on personal assessment has allowed me to begin an unending journey of transformation. This journey has revealed strengths and weaknesses; before DVULI, I would not have embraced nor revealed them to others. Now, I welcome them, seek to understand them, and grow from them. This breakthrough skill has created an atmosphere of honest communication, laid the groundwork to, and increased my leadership skills.”

“Through daily personal assessment, I am better able utilize the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of myself and my team members in order to achieve maximum results.”

“The breakthrough skills made a great impact in my personal life, in order to work in my ministry.”

Self-Inventory

Self-inventory emerged as a minor theme as graduates commented on the impact of Personal Assessment skills on their ministry. Self-inventory relates to graduates' abilities to inventory their strengths and weaknesses, using both formal and informal assessment methods. Graduates' responses were related to the ability to get a more accurate picture of themselves, their calling, and the progress of their ministry as it related to both their strengths and personal limitations.

“I truly had an off-kilter view of my assessment of strengths and weaknesses in myself. It caused me to limit my operation in ministry as a whole and to be overly critical of others in ministry.”

“I believe that personal assessment is the starting point. Understanding your calling, gifting, strengths and weaknesses is the foundation (other than Christ) for ministry.”

“Being consciously aware of my personal skills and strengths, as well as those areas where I am weak, has been a great help in focusing on doing that which God has equipped me to do well, and delegate to others those tasks which they are more gifted in than I. I rarely get bogged down now because I have been able to stick to what I am good at most of the time.”

Leadership Effectiveness

Skills in Personal Assessment also emerged as having an impact on graduates' leadership effectiveness. In this minor theme graduates said that in evaluating their leadership skills they were able to deal more effectively with other people and use their strengths to improve their partnerships with others.

"Learning my leadership style has been empowering for me as I lead ministry partners of various types. It has also allowed me to know how these same ministry partners best receive leadership and how I can accommodate their needs to better accomplish their tasks in ministry."

"I had reached my "leadership lid" before DeVos and I am now consistently tracking my personal and ministry health to stay on target, narrow my focus, and reach the community by building more helpful bridges of influence."

"I have increased my capacity to lead by utilizing the strengths and abilities of others around me."

Impact on Ministry

As graduates commented on Personal Assessment skills, they also identified the impact of those skills on their ministries. Graduates said that self-assessment had helped in personal priorities as well as changing their viewpoints and furthering their ministry.

"Personal assessment has affected my ministry by keeping me focused on what is important in life, then where I need to be as far as moving my ministry and in what direction, if any. I stay focused on how I interact with others in the ministry and what changes need to take place ... to help them advance or maybe move into leadership positions."

"It's affected my ministry in that I came to the realization I needed a sabbatical to focus on my family and the things we have ventured into for 2007."

"We've doubled our ministry capabilities by simply getting our heads up and looking around."

Impact on Decision Making

Personal Assessment skills were also found to be related to graduates' decision making skills. In this minor theme, several graduates said that ministry assessment helped them to think more clearly, critically, and objectively when making a decision.

"My ability to let go of cause-and-effect chain thinking has opened the door to understanding more on how things are connected and disconnected once one digs past the surface."

"I always think through every important action that I know is going to affect my outcome."

"Keeps me making the right decisions about how to proceed and in which direction."

"Helped me to gain an objective view of my goals/vision versus needed resources."

Collaboration

As mentioned earlier, a total of 19.9% of the graduates ranked Collaboration as their most important Breakthrough Skill. Collaboration skills were also discussed as graduates wrote about their #1-ranked Breakthrough Skills, with 21% of responses relating to these skills. Within the discussion of Collaboration skills, several minor themes also emerged, including the impact of Collaboration skills on: 1) other organizations, 2) personal ministry, 3) personal life, 4) the community, 5) youth, and 6) interactions with other DVULI graduates.

Impact on Other Organizations

Some graduates described how Collaboration affected other organizations, saying that it gets more people involved and increases quality when other organizations are included.

"It has helped me solidify my belief in a para-church organization."

"We work with more organizations daily then we did before DeVos."

"It provides mutual encouragement and empowerment to agencies that collaborate on events and programs. It gets people excited about the potential for future events when shared resources make for a better experience and better services are offered."

Impact on Ministry

Graduates also commented on how collaboration improved their ministries. They explained that collaboration helps to reach more people and to bring more tools in to help accomplish goals. It also makes the team feel more involved and gives the leaders more flexibility.

"I continue to grow in the realization that collaboration is key in my ministry. I work very hard to promote collaboration among the staff members with whom I work. I believe that by collaborating we are able to accomplish so much more and that we are able to make better use of the variety of gifts that exist in our organization."

"Working with the others in my team has allowed them to take on ownership of the ministry and has allowed me more time to work on the long-term mission of the ministry and not have to teach every week."

"Collaboration ranks high in what I do. We service the front line churches and ministries that work directly with children, youth and their families. Without collaborating with these groups we would not be able to impact the quality of life of at-risk youth, beyond the youth that I mentor personally. Through collaboration, we're able to resource more families with tools to help them break out of the cycle of spiritual, emotional and physical poverty."

Impact on Personal Life

An additional minor theme that emerged as graduates discussed the impact of Collaboration skills was that of the impact on themselves. They believed that it gives leaders the opportunity to incorporate other people's gifts so that the mission is not limited to what one person can do.

"For a long period of time I tried to do it all myself. Then I got connected with truly understanding the concept of collaboration. Now I look to others for their expertise and also share mine with others."

"Linking, collaborating and the skills that go into them more-or-less define my gifts and ministry. I am very limited by gifting and time to directly affect youth. However, through vision casting, relationship and trust building with others leaders, I feel I have strengthened the collaboration among leaders in our city and enabled other leaders more gifted than myself to stay in the game."

"Through collaborating, everything in life is better."

Impact on Community

In the next minor theme, several graduates described how Collaboration skills had affected their communities. Using collaboration, they can connect with others in the community to see what they are doing and how it is working, and then work together to come up with new ideas to be more effective in assessing and addressing the needs in that community.

"I have been more intentional about collaborating with other workers in the community. Lay Pastors, prayer meetings, networking with coaches who work with youth ages 12-16...encouraging them for their work."

"Collaboration has been playing an intricate part of our ministry. We have collaborated with the schools in the community and faith-based organizations as well, exploring various ideas and programs in the community and implementing new programs with the churches - youth at the forefront."

"Collaboration allows for connection to the community. That allows for deep change to happen."

Impact on Youth

The next minor theme is related to the impact of effective collaboration on youth. A few of the graduates said that these skills had made them more effective in reaching youth.

"Collaboration has allowed my ministry to expand and impact youth in exponential numbers."

"I am able to have one-on-one time with PK's (Preacher's Kids) to let them share their stories with me which helps me see many things that are so overlooked by many of us."

Impact on Interaction with other DVULI Graduates

The final minor theme that emerged was the impact of Collaboration skills on interactions with other DVULI graduates. Some graduates said that their partnerships with other DVULI graduates had given them encouragement and direction as well as support for their ministries.

"I meet with two friends from the DeVos training monthly. They are a huge support to me and the ministry I'm involved in. I hope to see our friendship grow and our commitment to each other's ministry strengthen this next year because of the grant given to us by DeVos. Thank you!! These friendships have been HUGE in my life."

"Working with others to accomplish God's purposes has been the best thing to come out of DeVos for me. I have planned events with fellow graduates and had others speak/teach/network with me on numerous occasions."

"Talking with other [DeVos] individuals helps me keep encouraged and on track with our core values."

Ministry Assessment

A total of 11% of graduates ranked Ministry Assessment as their #1 Breakthrough Skill, with only 5.5% ranking it as their lowest skill. Graduates discussed how they used these skills to understand and modify their ministry as a way to improve strategy, capacity, and relationships and thereby increase ministry effectiveness. Ministry assessment also helped them to think more clearly, critically, and objectively when making a decision. No minor themes emerged within this category.

“Ministry assessment is critical because I feel that I have so little time with the some kids who are in treatment (say, 6 months) and it's important for me to know that their spiritual needs are being addressed and as many as possible are being met while they are here. I'm constantly evaluating the activities and programs to see how kids respond to them so that I can know whether to increase, decrease or eliminate certain ones.”

“Believe it or not, I was once told by a trainer that you don't evaluate programs or people - it was not Godly. And while that caused a tension for me, I was lax in this area. Ministry assessment needs to happen on a daily basis. It makes people and programs sharper. And you can measure impact. Absolutely the best thing you can do.”

“It is so important to assess ministry. I do not want to fail God. Whenever possible I am assessing if I am meeting the needs of the people, following God's will not mine, moving the ministry to the next level. [The goal is] empowering the ministry workers to do God's work better and better, setting goals and objectives for the ministry and keeping the workers fired up about the work we have been called to do.”

Systems Thinking

A total of 11.2% of the graduates ranked Systems Thinking as their most important Breakthrough Skill, while almost a quarter (23.4%) indicated that Systems Thinking was their least important skill. Systems Thinking skills were also discussed as graduates wrote about their #1-ranked Breakthrough Skills, with 5.8% of responses relating to these skills. Systems thinking appeared to give graduates the ability to be less detail-focused and to become more aware of the big picture and how various systems within their communities were inter-related. Minor themes included: 1) recognizing the bigger picture and 2) understanding community and systems better.

Seeing the Bigger Picture

Graduates described how Systems Thinking helped them focus on the bigger picture so that they could complete a task instead of focusing on the smaller details that could hinder growth.

“Systems thinking allows me to focus on issues and problems from a larger viewpoint and try to resolve those issues rather than just to apply a ‘quick fix’.”

“It has helped me to view things on a bigger scale. Not only seeing the bigger scale but identifying the things that need to change and the steps to get there.”

“I am now able to see the whole picture as it relates to a specific challenge/issue. My problem solving skills have greatly improved. I am able to identify the causal loop, limiting and growing actions for each situation.”

Understanding the Community and its Systems

The ability to understand their community and its systems better also emerged as a minor theme. The graduates who responded in this way said that Systems Thinking helped them to see their community and its complex and inter-related networks in a new and more objective way.

“Systems Thinking has allowed me to see and understand my community and the work I do in it in a whole new way. This has changed the whole identity of my ministry because now I understand how it takes every asset in the community to change the community.”

“Systemic thinking is embedded in the way I think and how I plan working in the public school, a big system. You have to understand the ripple effects you cause when you create change. If you don't understand systemic thinking in a big system you will not survive.”

“Systems thinking, whether in ministry, work, home, or business is how things operate. Understanding systems in ministry, whether I agree with the system in place or not, has helped alleviate many of my frustrations.”

Scenario Planning

A total of 8.5% of the graduates ranked Scenario Planning as their most important Breakthrough Skill, while 13.7% of the DVULI graduates indicated that scenario planning was the least important skill. To clarify the effect Scenario Planning skills had on graduates' ministries, the Alumni Survey also requested that those graduates who ranked Scenario Planning as their #1-ranked Breakthrough Skill to describe how their ministries were impacted by applying this skill. The comments in this major theme represent 5.8% of the total responses

to the question: “Briefly describe how your #1-ranked breakthrough skill above has affected your ministry,” and describe graduates acquired skills in planning for the future. Scenario Planning teaches graduates to anticipate future challenges and opportunities and develop action plans to guide the process. Because of the small number of responses, no minor themes emerged for this skill.

“Scenario planning helps us anticipate future needs and pitfalls, as well as gives us vision for the present.”

“Without a plan or a map you have no idea where you are going. For me I have greatly appreciated scenario planning because it has helped me at least see or plan a picture and work out some details as I follow the plan.”

“I have to have a vision before I can bring anyone else aboard, to be able to make all the rest fall into place.”

Resource Networking

As noted earlier, a total of 4.8% of the graduates ranked Resource Networking as their most important Breakthrough Skill, while 23.2% of the DVULI graduates indicated that Resource Networking was their least important skill. Resource Networking skills were also discussed as graduates wrote about their #1-ranked Breakthrough Skills, with 3.5% of responses relating to these skills. Graduates described Resource Networking as reaching out to others to bring in new aspects, elements, or resources to a project. This in turn brings more resources and opportunities that allow for greater change. Because of the small number of responses, no minor themes emerged for this skill.

“I have a greater understanding of the importance of resource networking. The application of this skill has helped me and others in the community to achieve a greater level of working together. I have become more intentional about involving others in ministry work and I have taken a lead role in developing city wide networking efforts.”

“Sharing resources was important to me even before DVULI but it has become even more important to me after DVULI. I'm constantly networking and meeting with other youth workers in my neighborhood, and it has benefited me and my ministry.”

“Resource Networking has afforded the ministry with several opportunities of collaboration with other non-profit organizations and ministries with similar goals and mission for the community at large.”

Asset Mapping

As noted earlier, a total of 0.7% of the graduates ranked Resource Networking as their most important Breakthrough Skill, while 36.3% of the DVULI graduates indicated that Asset Mapping was the least important skill. This low ranking was also apparent as only two graduates (0.8%) wrote about the effect of their #1-ranked breakthrough skill on their ministries with only two graduates (0.8%) providing comments on this skill. To be realistic, however, one wouldn't generally expect graduates to use this skill on a daily or weekly basis since a formal community asset map is not necessary on a regular basis.

In this major theme, the first respondent explained that Asset Mapping helped to break down some personal barriers to the community. The other statement was from a graduate who wasn't sure what some of the terms meant. While all skills have been taught from the beginning of the Initiative, curriculum content may have been introduced differently or stressed to varying degrees over the course of the trainings. Because of the small number of responses, no clear themes emerged for this skill.

"It was an awesome breakthrough to see the entire community as an asset rather than a community ONLY in need!"

"Some of these items I don't think we had as breakthrough skills when I went through the Initiative. But if I am understanding them correctly I ranked how I think they would fit. Asset Mapping is last because I'm not sure what that is about..."

Miscellaneous or No Impact

The last major theme that emerged as a result of the analysis of graduates responses to the question: *"Briefly describe how your #1-ranked breakthrough skill above has affected your ministry"*. These miscellaneous responses describe comments by graduates who either said they did not experience an impact as a result of the breakthrough skills or thought that each skill was equally important. Of the total responses, 4.7% fit into this theme. The primary value of these statements is that it contextualizes and helps explain some of the differences in rank priorities. Quite simply, some skills are just used more than others due to the purpose and nature of that particular skill. This doesn't mean that the skill is not valuable, just that some skills are more integrated into the routines of regular ministry.

"This is harder than the core value ranking. At different times they all play a part and it's hard for me to rank them."

"These are very different types of skills, so they are difficult to rank. Some can be put into daily practice and others should be reserved for organizational planning. Organizational capacity is directly related to collaboration and resource networking. They are sort of part of Ministry Assessment (resource relationships,

capacity relationships), so that is why I put them first. I value Systems Thinking and Scenario Planning, but use them formally only about once a year. As a philosophy, I use them frequently. Similarly, Asset Mapping is more of a philosophy of community development (Asset Based Community Development) than a specific tool that I use."

"No explanation."

"Nothing has changed really."

Summary

Graduates ranked Personal Assessment as more than twice as important as any other skill. Collaboration was ranked as the second-most important skill, with Ministry Assessment and Systems Thinking virtually tied for third place. However, Ministry Assessment was chosen as the largest *second-ranked* Breakthrough Skill. Resource Networking received the second-to-lowest ranking in terms of ministry importance. Finally, almost no one chose Asset Mapping as their most important Breakthrough Skill. It is important to note that graduates were not asked to critique each skill, so no curriculum recommendations are made for this chapter.

A total of 56% of graduates practiced Personal Assessment on a daily or weekly basis. Graduates discussed using self-inventories to get a more accurate picture of themselves, their calling, and the progress of their ministry as it related to both their strengths and personal limitations. They felt that Personal Assessment improved leadership effectiveness because evaluating their leadership skills helped them deal more effectively with other people and use their strengths to improve their partnerships with others. Personal Assessment also helped them change their viewpoints and more effectively develop personal priorities.

A total of 60% of the graduates stated that they practiced Collaboration on a daily or weekly basis. They discussed collaboration's impact on other organizations in that it gets more people involved and increases ministry quality when other organizations are included. It impacts personal ministry by reaching more people and bringing more tools in to help accomplish goals. It also makes the ministry team feel more involved and gives the leaders more flexibility. The impact on their personal life included giving leaders the opportunity to incorporate other people's gifts so that the mission is not limited to what one person can do. This, in turn, influenced the community in that they were more able to connect with others to see what they were doing, how it was working, and then work together to come up with new ideas to be more effective in assessing and addressing the needs in that community. Some graduates also mentioned that their partnerships with other DVULI graduates had given them encouragement and direction as well as support for their ministries.

A total of 35% of the graduates stated that they practiced Ministry Assessment on a daily or weekly basis. Graduates discussed how they used these skills to understand and modify their ministry as a way to improve strategy, capacity, and relationships and thereby increase ministry

effectiveness. Ministry assessment also helped them to think more clearly, critically, and objectively when making a decision.

A total of 40% of the graduates stated that they practiced Systems Thinking on a daily or weekly basis. Systems thinking appeared to give graduates the ability to be less detail-focused and to become more aware of the big picture and how various systems within their communities were inter-related. It helped them focus on the bigger picture so that they could complete a task instead of focusing on the smaller details that could hinder growth. It also helped them to see their community and its complex and inter-related networks in a new and more objective way.

A total of 32% of the graduates stated that they practiced Scenario Planning on a daily or weekly basis. This skill taught graduates to anticipate future challenges and opportunities and develop action plans to guide the process. Because very few graduates selected this as their #1 skill, no minor themes emerged.

A total of 49% of the graduates stated that they practiced Resource Networking on a daily or weekly basis. Graduates described reaching out to others to bring in new aspects, elements, or resources to a project. This in turn brought more resources and opportunities that allowed for greater change. Because of the small number of responses, no minor themes emerged for this skill.

A total of 14% of the graduates stated that they practiced Asset Mapping on a daily or weekly basis. Because of the small number of responses, no clear themes emerged for this skill.

Chapter 5

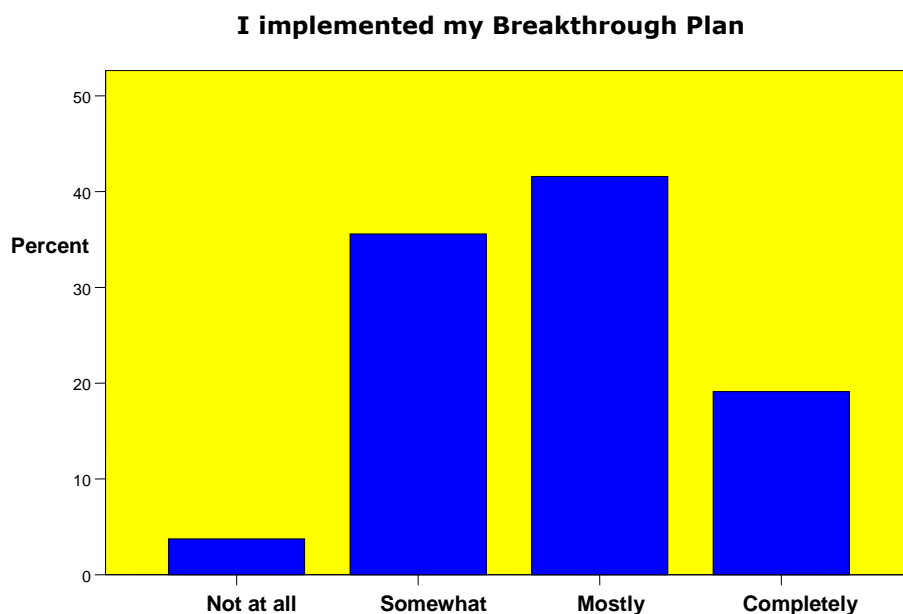
Achieving the Breakthrough Plan

The Breakthrough Plan is a critical element of the DVULI training process. The Initiative defines breakthrough as “strategic, significant, sustained change in how a person lives and works.” The Breakthrough Plan is described as “an explicit strategy to build capacity in others for ministry with urban youth.” To that end, the Breakthrough Plan seeks to help graduates develop a concrete, specific, measurable plan of action that will guide both their personal lives and ministry development into the future.

In order to assess progress toward achieving their Plan, graduates were first asked to respond to the following: “*Regarding my Breakthrough Plan, I implemented my Plan.*” Figure 5.1 shows that almost one fourth (19.1%) of all graduates had *completely* implemented their Breakthrough Plan and half (41.5%) of the graduates had implemented *most* of their plan. Just over one-third (35.6%) of the graduates stated that they had *somewhat* implemented their plan, with only 3.7% saying that they had not implemented their plan at all.

Considering that survey respondents could have graduated at any time between 1998 and 2005, this is a relatively strong percentage of graduates who have completely or mostly completed their plan. Further comparisons and recommendations for the quantitative Breakthrough Plan questions by gender, age, year of graduation, years in ministry, hours worked per week, and other relevant variables can be found in the chapter titled “*Looking to the Future*”.

FIGURE 5.1



The DVULI graduates were next asked to respond to the following: “*Regarding my Breakthrough Plan, I have achieved my Plan’s Goals*”. Figure 5.2 shows that only 12.9% said that they felt they had *Completely* achieved their plan’s goals, with another 37.3% believing that they had *Mostly* achieved their goals. The largest percentage of graduates (43%) said that they had *Somewhat* achieved their plan’s goals, with the remaining 6.8% who said that they did not feel that they implemented their plan at all.

Although some may find it somewhat frustrating to see that only about half of all respondents felt they had completely or mostly achieved their plan’s goals, it is also encouraging to see how few graduates (6.8%) had made no progress at all on their plan (an additional 3% didn’t answer the question). Further thoughts on the Breakthrough Plan later in this chapter help to explain some of the reasons for these numbers, including job changes and major and minor adjustments to their plan as graduates adapted to the changing complexities of their roles and positions.

With that said, DVULI staff may wish to consider ways to better maintain long-term follow through with graduates regarding their plans. However, responses to this question must be interpreted within the context of the year when respondents graduated, number of years in ministry, whether graduates worked part-time or full-time in ministry and a number of other variables that are discussed in greater detail in the “Looking to the Future” chapter.

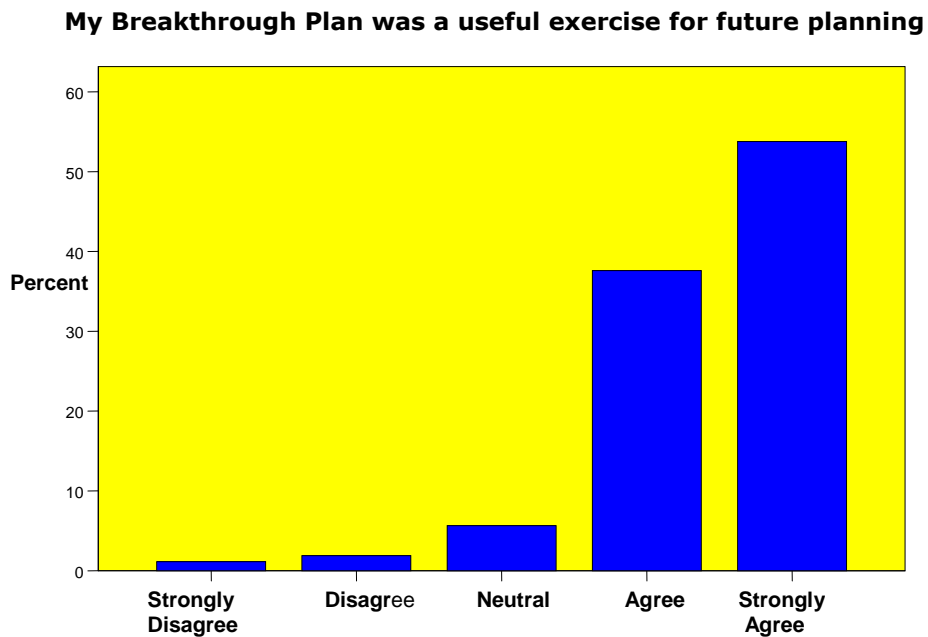
FIGURE 5.2



The DVULI graduates were also asked if the Breakthrough Plan was a useful exercise for future planning. Figure 5.3 shows that virtually all graduates (91.4%) *Strongly Agreed* or *Agreed* with this statement. Only 8.6% of the graduates chose *Neutral*, *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree* as responses, roughly mirroring the same percentage of graduates who had not implemented their plan.

Clearly, a high majority of graduates valued the Breakthrough Plan. Written comments later in this chapter certainly confirm this finding. Although it is difficult to determine, it appears as if there is a strong overlap between those who did not implement the plan and those who did not find it to be a useful planning exercise. Some of the possible reasons for this are spelled out at the end of this chapter, as well as in the Challenges and Barriers chapter found later in this report.

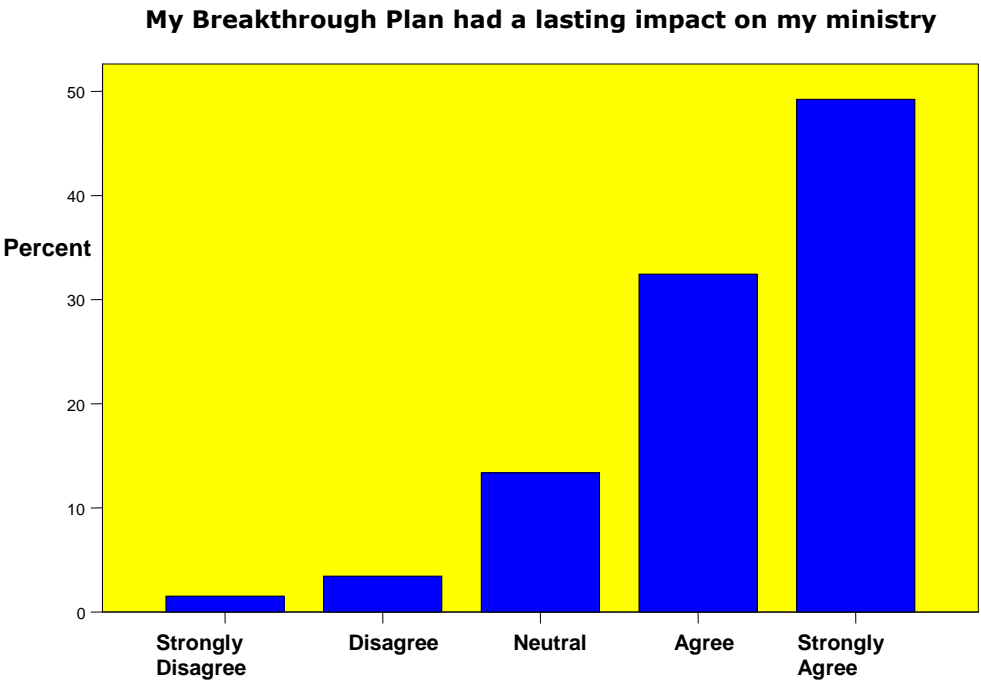
FIGURE 5.3



Finally, the DVULI graduates were asked if their Breakthrough plan had a lasting impact on their ministry. Again, a strong majority of graduates (81.6%) *Strongly Agreed* or *Agreed* with this statement, while 13.4% remained *Neutral*. Only 4.9% *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* with this statement.

This again represents a very high percentage of graduates who experienced a lasting impact in their ministries as a result of the Breakthrough Plan. The nature and extent of that impact can be found when reading the comments made by graduates in the section that follows.

FIGURE 5.4



The DVULI Alumni Survey also asked graduates to comment on the following statement: *“In a short paragraph, please describe how your Breakthrough Plan evolved and affected your ministry after DVULI training.”* Two researchers analyzed these short paragraphs by first reviewing a large sample of the comments and then developing a codebook to guide analysis of the quotations. All 271 graduates wrote a short paragraph in this section of the survey but many of the paragraphs contained more than one theme, so researchers ended with a total of 419 separate comments or phrases for this question. The results were divided into seven major themes each containing a number of sub-themes. The major themes that emerged as a result of the analysis included: 1) the Breakthrough Plan’s impact on ministry, 2) the Breakthrough Plan’s impact on graduates’ personal lives, 3) personal challenges faced by graduates in completing the Breakthrough Plan, 4) Breakthrough Plan evolution, 5) attributes of the training valued by the graduates, 6) challenges related to DVULI training, and 7) ministry challenges that hindered the implementation of graduates’ Breakthrough Plans.

Impact on Ministry

The first major theme that emerged through the analysis addresses how the Breakthrough Plan impacted graduates’ ministries. The process of developing the Breakthrough Plan assisted graduates with defining the focus of their ministry and developing strategies to meet ministry goals. In addition, graduates acquired new skills and improved existing skills directly impacting ministry to their churches, youth, and communities. Thirty-nine percent of the total responses were related to this theme.

“The Breakthrough Plan helped to get the ball rolling in terms of shaping my ministry. A lot has evolved since then.”

“Well, I was able and equipped to first know that it would be helpful to me in going forward, then I applied the process, worked through the procedure and it has affected my ministry greatly! You will never really know just how much!”

“I set certain goals to get financially stable and we did, above and beyond what I thought we could. I also needed the ministry to have reliable transportation and we did. We also needed a strong education base for the boys and that was also accomplished. “

Responses related to the Breakthrough Plan’s impact on ministry were further divided into sub-themes including its impact on graduates’: 1) clarity and focus in ministry, 2) balance in ministry and personal life, 3) ability to impact the community, 4) developing additional youth leaders, 5) developing greater personal accountability, 6) developing new projects, and 7) becoming involved in new opportunities.

Clarity and Focus in Ministry

Through the development of the Breakthrough Plan graduates sought to define their ministerial goals, vision, and values. They were able to plan for the future and develop a clear strategic plan to guide their actions. Minor sub-themes included: 1) progress toward ministerial goals, 2) clarification of ministry vision, and 3) clarification of core values. General comments on clarity and focus in ministry included such comments as:

“My breakthrough plan allowed me to tie all of the components from the training together in a way that would allow me to expand and move my ministry forward.”

“My purposes were too scattered. Breakthrough planning helped me to focus on what is really important in my life and to articulate that to myself- it has given me a great sense of purpose & direction....”

Progress toward Ministerial Goals. Many of the responses were related to graduates identifying and discussing the progress toward their ministerial goals that resulted from developing a Breakthrough Plan. While some responses revealed that graduates had achieved their goals, others showed that some of the graduates continued working on their goals and some goals had changed.

“After the plan, I had a plan to follow! It was so much more clear and I just checked off the implementations of plan as I reached them. There is only one small component left to be put in place, so it is not quite complete. (99.75%).”

“I achieved some of my goals, but I still have a long way to go.”

“I had excellent goals and an aggressive timeline, too aggressive actually. My adjusted plan is still pretty much the same, but on a more realistic schedule.”

Clarification of Ministry Vision. While some responses focused on the goals graduates developed in their Breakthrough Plan, others focused on how the planning process helped them clarify their ministry vision and convey that vision to others. Graduates also commented on the acquired ability of to see the broader picture when clarifying their ministry vision.

“It made me move from the visionary position that I had held for so long to writing out the visions that I and others could understand and it was plain. The journey was not being made up as I went along as I did before....”

“Breakthrough plan caused me to stretch my thought process and look at a bigger picture.”

Clarification of Core Values. Graduates also commented on the attainment of clarity and focus in their core values as a result of completing a Breakthrough Plan. In some responses, graduates identified specific core values of the DVULI training that resonated with them and became a driving force for achieving clarity and focus of ministry and within their personal lives.

Other responses were related to the DVULI core values coupled with the Breakthrough Plan becoming a building block for graduates' ministries.

"My breakthrough plan was the core value 'Empowerment.' Commitment in our ministry was at a low...."

"The plan led me to really assess my personal life and ministry life. During this process I ascertained that I had to start with the core value 'balance.'"

"When I started this training my youth program consisted of four kids. After implementing many changes, personally and ministerially, it grew to over 30. I believe I had all the core values going."

Balance in Ministry and Personal Life

In addition to helping graduates attain clarity and focus in ministry, the analysis also revealed that the Breakthrough Plan further impacted graduates' ministries by helping them achieve balance in ministry. The Breakthrough Plan gave graduates a chance to evaluate the need to implement leadership skills and evaluate the balance between ministry needs and personal needs. Burnout is a particular concern when individuals have not set limits and do not exercise leadership skills such as empowerment, networking, and collaboration. Responses within this sub-theme revealed that some of the graduates were able implement leadership skills and increase their sense of balance. Other responses revealed that some graduates were able to successfully achieve balance between ministry and personal needs while others were not.

"My ministry plans were disjointed and hit and miss before the DVULI. As a result of the training, I was able to connect the dots between ministry, vision, staffing, networking, and needed resources."

"I have been able to have more people involved with helping the need. I felt I always had to get it done myself. By better planning, more are helped, more are involved. Bottom line – [I am] far more effective."

"Well, I wanted balance overall. Basically operating in the field as I had been had been taking over my life. When offered the opportunity to switch to field ministry I jumped on it. "

Achieving Community Impact

When asked to describe how the Breakthrough Plan impacted their ministries, some graduates commented on achieving community impact. DVULI has sought to train leaders within urban communities and it is not surprising that this goal would translate into graduates'

Breakthrough Plans and achievements. Through networking and collaboration projects, some graduates included and achieved community outcomes.

“It led to an incredible, city-wide collaboration involving high risk youth and led to other areas of breakthrough.”

“My breakthrough Plan evolved and affected my ministry because I had begun with the youth by implementing Gospel Drill Teams city wide. Now it has grown from city to state-wide, and state-wide to nation-wide.”

Developing Leadership Skills in Youth

An additional sub-theme that emerged related to how the Breakthrough Plan impacted graduates' ministries was the development of leadership skills in youth. The DVULI training emphasizes empowerment and leadership development within its curriculum, encouraging graduates to pass on their acquired skills to other potential leaders. Responses related to this sub-theme reveal that some graduates have included this aspect of the training in their Breakthrough Plans; some have been training future leaders, and others have been developing mentoring programs.

“In my breakthrough plan, I wanted to implement a program that would intentionally help kids to apply the Word of God to their lives and begin to develop some leadership skills that would help them to be successful in their homes and in their communities.”

“My breakthrough plan evolved through the concept and personal need I had to develop youth leadership in my community. I wanted to see more Christian youth leading in my community. After DVULI, I have continued to develop youth leaders in my ministry....”

“My plan was ‘SLAM’ - Student Leaders and Missionaries. We have established a model for doing youth ministry at the church with a team instead of one person....now we have a youth guidance council and a Youth Leadership Team....”

Development of Accountability

This was an additional sub-theme that emerged related to how the development of a Breakthrough Plan impacted graduates' ministries. After engaging in the planning process, graduates had the ability to use the Breakthrough Plan to measure their ministerial success. Some found this to be a valuable aspect of the Breakthrough Plan.

“...it is always a good refresher to get it [the Breakthrough Plan] out from time to time and re-evaluate what things may have slipped into old habits.”

"My Breakthrough Plan has evolved and affected my ministry over the past years with a clearer vision, purpose, and goal with measurable expected outcomes."

New Ministry Projects

Some graduates described new ministry projects that were related to the development of a Breakthrough Plan. This sub-theme includes responses related to projects that were included in graduates' Breakthrough Plans or evolved from those plans, projects that are in the process of being implemented, projects that have been funded, and projects that involve mentoring youth.

"My breakthrough plan was to start a non-profit organization called Triple S CDC. It has been up and running for the past year and a half. There are many things I would like to do with Triple S CDC that are yet to be done...."

"My breakthrough plan is now the SLAM (Successful Living and Mentoring) project in Detroit. I received funding from the Sisters of the Humility of Mary (\$100,000)...."

"My Breakthrough Plan evolved out of a desperate need for a mentoring program for youth girls."

New Ministry Opportunities

The final sub-theme that emerged was related to the impact of developing of a Breakthrough Plan on graduates' new ministry opportunities. Some graduates were offered positions in and outside of ministry where they carried the skills they learned through the development of the Breakthrough Plan. Others acquired additional responsibilities or became involved in larger projects.

"My breakthrough plan was significant for the next tier of leadership I assumed. I was able to accept this new leadership opportunity with great clarity of what I was bringing to the organization and what I expected from the organization."

"...God redirected me to a national position where I believe I will have a seat at the national table to make/influence decisions."

"It led to an incredible, city-wide collaboration involving high risk youth and led to other areas of breakthrough."

Impact on Personal Life

The second major theme that emerged is related to how the Breakthrough Plan impacted graduates' personal lives. Of the 419 responses, 20% were related to this theme. At the core of the breakthrough process is the creation of change in graduates on a personal level. Three minor themes emerged within this theme as a result of the analysis: 1) graduates attaining balance (this minor theme emerged under both the impact on ministry and impact on personal life themes), 2) graduates attaining a spiritual breakthrough, and 3) graduates attaining a sense of empowerment.

Attaining Balance

DVULI training includes the need to attain balance on a holistic level. Graduates develop personal growth plans learning how to identify their personal priorities, attend to their families and other relationships, care for themselves, and live in moderation. Some general comments relating to the achievement of balance include:

"My Breakthrough Plan has helped me personally, particularly with balance."

"It forced me to 'plan ahead' - which was not something readily done, due to the imbalance."

Within the minor theme attaining balance, three sub-themes emerged: 1) balancing physical health, 2) balancing personal goals, and 3) balancing family life. The core values of the Initiative include balance and describe balance of an individual's physical health as being directly related to balance within an individual's spiritual life. Comments made regarding the impact of the Breakthrough Plan on graduates' physical health included:

"I realized through DVULI that if I was not healthy, it was not possible for me to have a healthy ministry."

"My neglect of my personal, spiritual and physical self had been affecting my ministry. My breakthrough plan helped me to see how the lack of attention on me flowed to the stagnation of my ministry."

In addition to graduates commenting on how the Breakthrough Plan impacted the achievement of balance in physical health, they also commented on how it impacted the achievement of balance related to personal goals. Responses reveal that some graduates were able to achieve the personal goals they included in their Breakthrough Plans while others realized that in order to become a balanced individual, they had to take care of themselves. The Breakthrough Plan gave some graduates the opportunity to analyze the need for self-care when working in ministry.

"The balance portion of my breakthrough plan is where I have experienced the most success. I was completely out of balance. It used to be all about youth

ministry. I isolated myself from my peers and felt guilty about spending time for myself."

"My breakthrough plan was very focused on personal growth and moving toward living a more balanced life. As stated previously, I realized through DVULI that if I was not healthy, it was not possible for me to have a health ministry."

"My breakthrough plan helped me to focus on me. My neglect of my personal, spiritual, and physical self had been affecting my ministry."

The analysis generated an additional sub-theme related to the Breakthrough Plan assisting graduates with focusing on balance in family life. Some graduates realized that they had been neglecting their families and focusing more on ministry. Other responses suggest that graduates included balance in family life within their Breakthrough Plans leading to an increase in family time and in some cases, a change in ministry position to allow more time for family.

"My Breakthrough Plan involved me spending more quality time with my family. Each Monday, I dedicate the entire day to my family...."

"I started giving more time to cultivating my family relationships."

"I decided to step back from my ministry to minister to my family."

Attaining Spiritual Breakthrough

The second minor theme related to the Breakthrough Plan's impact on graduates' personal lives is the attainment of a spiritual breakthrough. A spiritual breakthrough relates to a new way of seeing how God has been moving and working in one's life, an ability to see a larger picture of God's plan, and a new sense of trust and confidence in God's leading in the future.

"I've discovered God doesn't move in leaps and bounds. However, He does move us step by step. Faithfulness in spite of the outcome is a result of my breakthrough plan."

"My particular breakthrough plan was more on the soft skills side--I had a spiritual breakthrough. It was a turning point in my ministry development in that it helped me to see my ministry in the larger context."

Personal Empowerment

The third minor theme related to the Breakthrough Plan's impact on graduates' personal lives was related to personal empowerment. Empowerment involves developing a sense of confidence through skill provision and the ability to experience success as a result of attaining those skills. Within this minor theme are three sub-

themes including graduates' comments on; 1) the usefulness of skills learned such as writing a Breakthrough Plan, networking, and resource utilization, 2) the pursuit of further education, and 3) the Breakthrough Plan resulting in promotions.

Graduates expressed a sense of personal empowerment as a result of acquiring leadership skills developed when writing their Breakthrough Plans. This sub-theme describes the confidence gained by graduates of the initiative.

"It has allowed me to better serve my church and my community as well as build a sense of confidence in myself."

"... the teachers I work with are amazed at what I have done and my ability to utilize resources, networking, and empowering young people."

"One of the major accomplishments was to empower others in reaching the youth in my ministry."

Some graduates were empowered to pursue further education as a result of developing their Breakthrough Plan. The goals outlined within those plans demanded additional skills or degrees and a few graduates chose to continue working toward their goals making life changing decisions such as leaving ministry positions or going back to school (see report titled "The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Assessing the Need for Academic Credit" for further details in this area).

"After the Initiative, I completed an MBA and I am working on a Ph.D. The delivery of the program gave me a vision to become more skillful in developing leaders."

"Part of my breakthrough was that I had a hard time doing my missionary project because I felt unprepared in my educational status and I was ashamed to network or even share what I did know. But I have further educated myself...."

Additional responses related to graduates' empowerment as a result of developing a Breakthrough Plan were regarding promotions attained after completing the initiative. Some graduates confidently took the skills they learned back to their ministries and were rewarded.

"My breakthrough plan was well received by the senior pastor. I was eventually asked to become the youth director of our church."

Personal Challenges

Several of the graduates discussed how personal challenges impacted the implementation of their Breakthrough Plans and their ministries. Chapter 6 also includes personal and ministry challenges. Where there are several similar themes in both sections, most of those comments are not related specifically to the Breakthrough Plan. About 13 % of the total responses were

related to this major theme. Personal challenges included the individual characteristics of graduates such as habits and health challenges that hindered the implementation of the Breakthrough Plan. Personal challenges also included challenges faced by graduates from family, community, and ministry leaders. In some cases challenges were related to a move and change in position.

"It wasn't an easy process. I really had to put effort in changing the parts of me that needed to change to make the plan effective...."

"My Breakthrough Plan had a good start and had a positive impact, however God re-directed the plan he had for me. I had a hard time understanding what was happening to me. Lots of tests and trials, and patience was being sown into my spirit."

As a result of further analysis of personal challenges faced by graduates in implementing their Breakthrough Plans several minor themes emerged. Comments revealed that: 1) some graduates felt they lacked community support, 2) others experienced health challenges, 3) some believed they were held back by the leadership within their ministries, 4) others were challenged with learning to empower others, and 5) several moved to another location, church, or ministry.

Lack of Community Support

Community capacity building is one of the Breakthrough Skills that graduates are taught and encouraged to incorporate within their Breakthrough Plans. Part of this capacity building includes the ability to find resources and use them to "build strong, healthy, self-supporting communities." Some of the graduates experienced challenges with implementing their Breakthrough Plans related to a lack of financial support, volunteers, and buy in from community leaders.

"...without ongoing community and financial support, I have put ministry plans on the shelf."

"Commitment in our ministry is at a low; therefore those responsibilities I passed on [are] now mine again."

"It would have worked if I could have pulled community leaders together. I was very frustrated because we were in the process and egos got in the way."

Health Challenges

In addition to the challenges experienced related to community support, some graduates listed health problems as hindering the implementation of their Breakthrough Plans. Some commented on the challenge of reaching the health goals listed in their plans while others

listed health as a factor preventing them from implementing their Breakthrough Plans. Some graduates have not been able to fully implement their Breakthrough Plans leading to increased stress and workload.

"My health goals on my breakthrough plan have been a challenge."

"Being everywhere and trying to do everything and being tired, frustrated, yet not getting the return you expected has been stressful. However, every year you just commit to working harder."

"....I've had a lot of health issues following bladder cancer surgery...."

Held Back by Leadership

Some graduates felt they were held back by the leadership within their ministries and were not able to fully achieve their Breakthrough Plans. In many instances, the graduate's vision did not match up with that of leadership.

"My breakthrough plan evolved in large part from my frustrations with my leadership and the unclear expectations that they had of me as well as a bit of a different vision from the rest of my ministry team."

"I left my church and joined a church who welcomed my gifts by God and welcomed my training with DVULLI. I now [am] able to work without having my hands tied."

"At first it was guiding my actions and decisions in my ministry. That soon came to [a] stop when the leadership over me didn't think it was an effective plan."

Empowering Others

Another minor theme that emerged as graduates discussed the difficulties they experienced with implementing their Breakthrough plans was the challenge of learning to empower others within their personal lives and ministry positions. Without this ability or learned skill, a few graduates only achieved minimal success while others discontinued work on their Breakthrough Plan entirely. However, some graduates experienced growth in this area.

"Unfortunately as a person who struggles with workaholic tendencies, implementation regarding balance [was] not incredibly successful."

"My personal life took the forefront when finances [were] scarce and I needed to get a full-time [job]."

"I learned that I am not the 'know all' or 'do all' and by removing that thought process I also no longer hold back or keep those on staff from growth...."

Changed Location, Church, or Ministry

As graduates' lives evolved, so did their needs, opportunities, and families. Movement emerged as a minor theme that impacted the implementation of graduates' Breakthrough Plans. Some changed ministry positions, some moved to different churches, while others moved out of state or even the country. These changes resulted in graduates discontinuing work on their Breakthrough Plans or modifying their plans slightly or entirely. Some of the responses were related to how moving from areas of ministry, churches, states, and countries impacted the implementation of their plans while other comments related to the Breakthrough Plan becoming a force that enabled graduates to make shifts in ministry and locations.

"I was not able to implement my breakthrough plan because I moved shortly after my graduation to a new ministry, community, and state."

"My attempts fell short due to change of ministry occupation, but the depth of what I learned has developed into a long range breakthrough plan."

"I began to realize that I was leading in areas that I did not belong and I also recognized that the ministry I was a part of was not exactly a good fit. I stepped down from that ministry to pursue a position that is closer to my personal mission and core values."

"God led my wife and I to make a move to the East Coast for a temporary assignment which I may not have seriously considered otherwise."

Breakthrough Plan Evolution

An additional major theme deals with how the Breakthrough Plan evolved after the training. Since the plan was never intended to be a static document, it is natural for the document to grow and change with feedback from mentors and colleagues, changing ministry circumstances, and dynamic shifts in thinking on the part of the graduates. Of the total responses, almost 8% were related to this theme. Some general comments relating to their plan's evolution include:

"My breakthrough plan evolved through the feedback of my mentor, city coordinator and my family."

"My breakthrough plan had a personal piece and a ministry piece. Both are indeed evolving because they deal with the changes that are needed...."

Within these responses, two minor themes emerged in the analysis: 1) graduates changing their Breakthrough Plan, and 2) graduates re-writing their Plan.

Changing the Breakthrough Plan

As noted earlier, making modifications to the Breakthrough Plan is a natural and important outgrowth of the wide variety of life changes that emerge over the course of one's personal and ministry life. These changes were described in a variety of ways by graduates, including such comments as:

"What I initially thought was my Breakthrough Plan was inaccurate. It has evolved into something else considerably. "

"The plan has evolved as situations have changed and different needs arise. It is still a work in progress and has taken much more time than originally thought."

"After the initial breakthrough plan I realized that life is a series of breakthrough plans. I have used scenario planning several times...."

Re-Writing the Breakthrough Plan

The second minor theme involved graduates re-writing their Breakthrough Plan. While these comments have much in common with the first minor theme, it is important to recognize that graduates actually took the time to *re-write* the document, as opposed to just changing it (which may imply re-writing but could also include those who just made the changes in their minds). Comments include:

"Actually, my breakthrough plan changed and my position and ministry. I'm in the process of writing a new breakthrough plan."

"I have revisited my Breakthrough Plan several times. I evaluate it and then rewrite it. It has changed over the years yet the core remains the same."

Highly Valued Attributes

An additional theme that emerged related to attributes of the Initiative and how these attributes impacted graduates' ministries. Many of the skills taught by DVULI are fused with the development of graduates' Breakthrough Plans and facilitated the implementation of those plans. Graduates have found the strategic planning processes, networking and leadership skills, and support services to be valuable as they have worked within their areas of ministry. Less than 1% of the total responses were related to this theme.

"The light went on for me in ministry when I went to the Scenario Planning Workshop and with the help of others saw exactly how to bring about the results I needed to bring about change."

"My plan evolved during the course of my secular employment and has helped me to see how God is working through my new opportunity to establish relationships across the U.S."

"My Breakthrough Plan evolved through the feedback of my mentor, city coordinator and my family. With the help of these individuals, I was able to paint a realistic plan for my future."

"One of the most important factors that is helping my Breakthrough Plan is our local DeVos meetings. That is where I am able to get feedback from my fellow leaders."

Training Challenges

A few of the graduates' responses were related to their experiences with carrying out the Breakthrough Plan due to what they considered DVULI training challenges. Inability to understand instructions, lack of fit with ministry needs, graduates' inability to remember what the Breakthrough Plan was about, and the struggle to make needed personal changes in order to benefit from the training were a few of the challenges faced during and after completing the initiative. However, less than 1% of the total responses were related to this minor theme.

"The nature of the breakthrough plan was not clear from the beginning and in writing my plan I attempted to be broad in what I wanted. I also had little accountability in holding me to implementing its various aspects."

"I never completed a breakthrough plan. At that point in time, no one could give me a clear definition of 'breakthrough.'"

"It didn't really apply to my situation and my ministry area. I have never used it."

"It's been too long. I don't even remember the specifics of my Breakthrough Plan."

"It wasn't an easy process. I really had to put effort in changing the parts of me that needed to change to make the plan effective."

Ministry Challenges

Some graduates discussed the challenges they experienced related to ministry and the impact of these challenges in carrying out the Breakthrough Plan. As graduates returned to

their churches, ministries, and communities with enthusiasm and vision, some of them were met with opposition from church and community leaders who found their Breakthrough Plans to be too aggressive or progressive. Others experienced a change in position. However, in some situations, the skills learned through DVULI resulted in graduates overcoming ministry challenges and rejuvenating their ministries. Less than 1% of the total responses were related to this theme. However, more details on Challenges and Frustrations can be found in a later section.

"I have left my job with the youth organization here in Denver...It seems that they were not open to moving in the direction that I know I had to pursue."

"My ministry crumbled while attending the initiative. Yet, I was committed to what the Lord had called me to do. DeVos gave me the tools to keep moving forward."

"My breakthrough plan evolved through diagnosing the shortcoming of the ministry. After the DVULI training, I have been able to address these shortcomings and make adjustments in my administrative style which makes for a smoother running ministry."

Summary

Over 60% of all graduates had completely or mostly implemented their Breakthrough Plan, with most of the rest saying they had somewhat implemented their plan. Similarly, around half of all graduates had completely or mostly achieved their plan's goals, with another 43% who had somewhat achieved their plan's goals. Virtually all graduates *Strongly Agreed* or *Agreed* that that the Breakthrough Plan was a useful exercise for future planning and had made a lasting impact on their ministries. Further details emerged in the written portion of the Alumni Survey, where graduates discussed different ways in which the Breakthrough Plan had influenced their lives and ministries.

First, a large number of graduates believed the plan had made a positive impact on their ministries. The process of developing the Breakthrough Plan assisted graduates with defining the focus of their ministry and developing strategies to meet ministry goals. In addition, graduates acquired new skills and improved existing skills directly impacting ministry to their churches, youth, and communities. The plan helped them make progress toward ministerial goals, clarify their ministry vision and core values, achieve balance, and develop personal accountability. The plan also helped them achieve a variety of community impacts in terms of new ministry projects and opportunities with both youth and adults.

Second, graduates believed the plan had positively influenced their personal lives by helping them to attain balance in the areas of family, self-care, and moderate living. It also helped them achieve spiritual breakthroughs - seeing how God had been moving and working in their lives, developing an ability to see a larger picture of God's plan, and developing a new sense of

trust and confidence in God's leading in the future. Graduates also described attaining a sense of personal empowerment through skill provision and the ability to experience success as a result of attaining those skills.

Some graduates described personal challenges in completing their plan based on resistance from family, community, and ministry leaders. For example, some graduates felt they lacked community support, others experienced health challenges, and still others believed they were held back by the leadership within their ministries. Others were challenged with learning to empower others and several moved to another location, church, or ministry.

Since the plan was never intended to be a static document, some graduates made changes to their document as they grew and changed with feedback from mentors and colleagues, changing ministry circumstances, and dynamic shifts in thinking on the part of the graduates.

Finally, three themes emerged that collectively represented less than 3% of all comments in this area. These themes included valuable attributes of the Breakthrough Plan, challenges relating to DVULI training, and ministry challenges that hindered implementation of the plan.

While most of the challenges that emerged were partially and often largely outside of the graduates' control, DVULI staff may wish to consider ways to better maintain long-term monitoring and consulting with graduates regarding their plans. This is particularly important since plans and circumstances can change quite dramatically over several years. However, it is also important to remember that responses to this question must be interpreted within the context of the year when respondents graduated, number of years in ministry, whether graduates worked part-time or full-time in ministry and a number of other variables that are discussed in greater detail in the "Looking to the Future" chapter.

Chapter 6

Vocational Impact

Ministry Improvement

One of the major goals of the Initiative is to improve graduates' ministries, thereby reducing the rates of ministry turnover among participants. One way to measure achievement of this goal is to ask individuals if they are better off now than they were before the Initiative, assuming that those who are better off are less likely to move to another job or type of employment. The DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates how the training had helped them improve in job performance, job satisfaction, and earning the respect of supervisors and colleagues. Table 6.1 shows the responses to these questions.

TABLE 6.1

<i>DVULI training has helped me to improve in:</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Job Performance	1.5	1.5	7.5	44.4	45.1
Job Satisfaction	1.9	5.0	17.2	41.6	34.4
Earning the Respect of Supervisors	2.4	4.8	26.3	33.5	33.1
Earning the Respect of Colleagues	1.1	3.8	18.0	42.9	34.1

Job Performance

A large majority (89.5%) of the graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the training had improved their job performance. Very few (7.5%) chose to remain Neutral, while even fewer (3%) either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. Clearly, job performance for almost all graduates has been enhanced by DVULI training.

Job Satisfaction

More than three-quarters (76%) of the graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the training had improved their job satisfaction. Less than one-fifth (17.2%) chose to remain Neutral, and even fewer (6.9%) either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. While job satisfaction ranks lower than job performance, it is clear that a large majority of graduates are more satisfied with their jobs than they were prior to the training.

Earning the Respect of Supervisors

Two-thirds (66.6%) of the graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the training helped them in the area of earning the respect of their supervisors. Over a quarter (26.3%) of them chose to remain Neutral, and 7.2% either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. The one-third of respondents who were neutral or disagreed may reflect the challenges that some graduates had in translating DVULI language and concepts into their work settings.

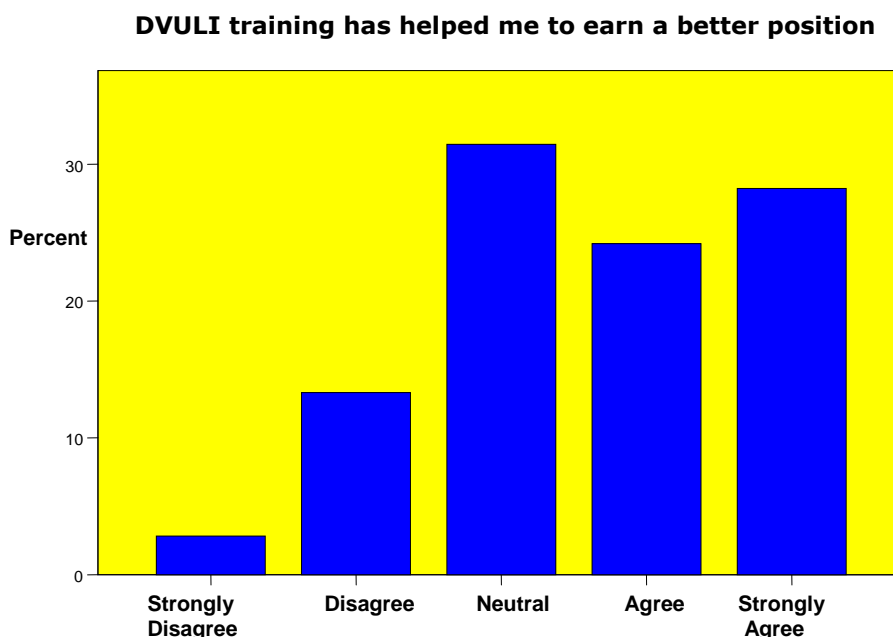
Earning the Respect of Colleagues

A large majority (77%) of the graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the training helped them gain the respect of their colleagues. Close to one-fifth (18%) chose to remain Neutral and even fewer (4.9%) either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. DVULI training clearly had a positive impact on collegial interaction for a large majority of graduates.

Earning a Better Position

The graduates were also asked if DVULI training had helped them earn a better position. Results to this question were fairly scattered (see Table 6.2), with a slim majority (53.1%) of the graduates choosing to Strongly Agree or Agree. A large percentage (31%) of the graduates answered Neutral to this question, with 15.9% of all graduates choosing Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Findings in this section must be viewed with caution because many graduates may have remained in the same ministry position since graduation, particularly those respondents who only recently graduated from the Initiative.

TABLE 6.2

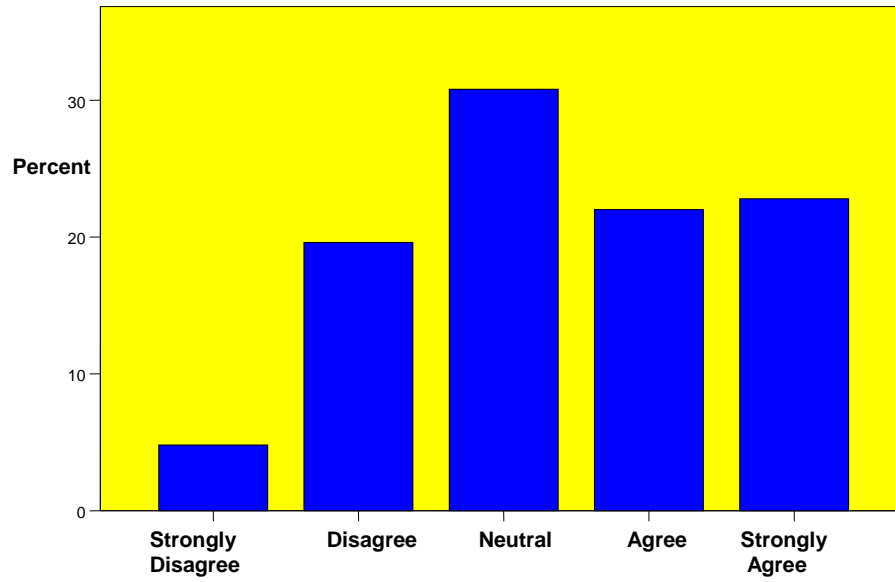


Finally, the Alumni Survey asked graduates if the training helped them to increase their personal income. Almost half (44.8%) stated that they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement, while another one-third (31.5%) chose to remain Neutral. The remaining 23.7% of graduates stated that they either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement.

Again, these results must be viewed with caution. On the one hand, almost half of all graduates experienced an increase in their income, which is good news. On the other hand, just over half of the graduates did not experience any increases in income – not good news for those individuals. There are undoubtedly a wide variety of reasons for both outcomes, including the fact that many graduates attained further education during or following completion of the Initiative. Since one of the largest predictor of income is level of education, readers are referred to the companion report titled *“The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Assessing the Need for Academic Credit.”*

TABLE 6.3

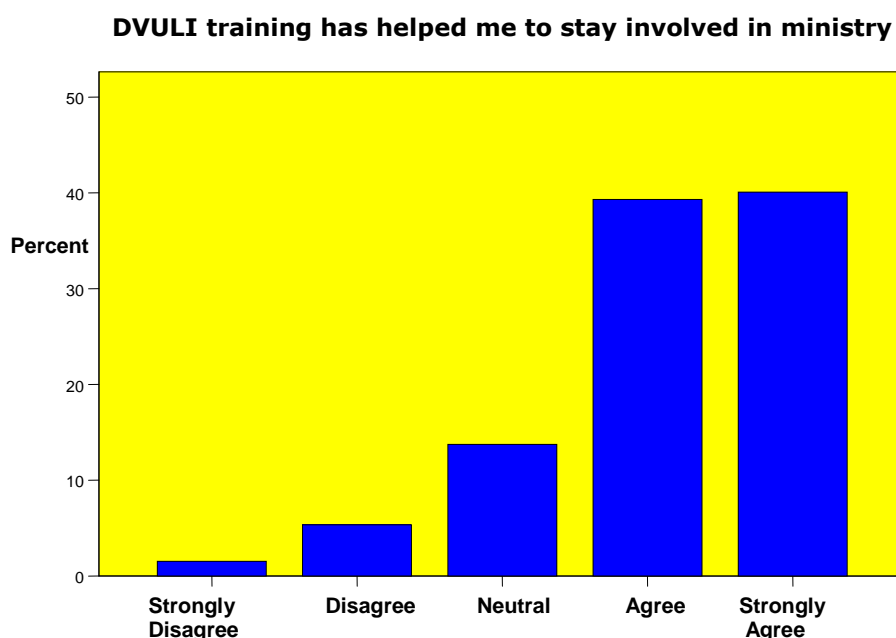
DVULI training helped me to increase my personal income



Remaining in Ministry

One of the major goals of the Initiative is to help graduates remain in ministry. One way to measure achievement of this goal was to ask individuals if DVULI training helped them stay involved in ministry, and youth ministry in particular.

FIGURE 6.4



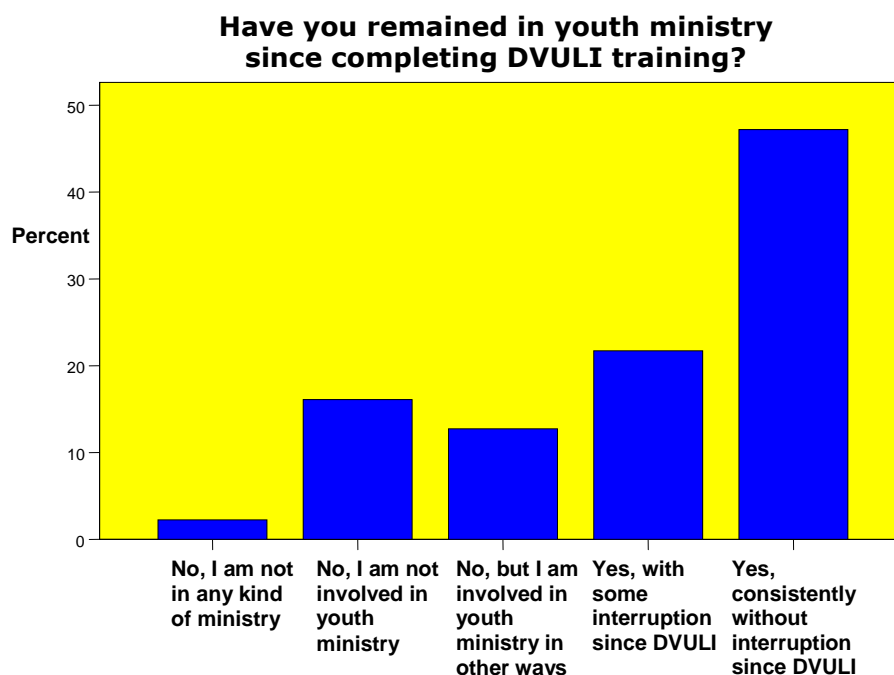
The DVULI graduates were first asked if “DVULI training helped me to stay involved in ministry”. Of the 262 people who answered this question, 79.3% either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with this statement. Another 13.7% said they were Neutral, while 6.8% either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the statement.

While we have no way of knowing what proportion of DVULI participants would have remained in ministry had they not been involved in the Initiative, retaining slightly less than 80% in ministry of some form is a major accomplishment, particularly when considering the wide variety of life events and ministry challenges that most ministers face in urban environments. It is also unclear what graduates meant when they chose the Neutral option, but, given that only 2.2% of respondents in Table 6.5 said that they were not involved in any kind of ministry, it may mean that those individuals no longer remained in formal ministry but continued to serve in volunteer roles.

Next, DVULI graduates were asked if they had specifically remained in the field of youth ministry since completing training. Figure 6.5 shows that the largest percentage of graduates

(68.9%) said that they remained in youth ministry either consistently without any interruptions or with some interruptions since completing DVULI training. An additional 12.7% of the graduates said they did not remain formally involved in youth ministry, but chose to be involved in youth ministry activities in other ways. Finally, a total of 16.1% of the graduates said they were not involved in youth ministry, while an almost non-existent 2.2% stated they were not involved in any kind of ministry.

FIGURE 6.5



Based on graduates' written responses to questions in other sections of this report, it is clear that the calling to ministry sometimes broadened beyond youth ministry as graduates moved into other full-time and part-time ministry roles. This is often a natural progression within their ministry career and should not, in our judgment, be viewed as a failure of the program since virtually all the responding graduates remain in ministry in some form or another. Clearly, the Initiative was a driving force in helping graduates remain involved in ministry in general, and youth ministry in particular. Further breakdown and detailed discussion of these percentages by age, years in ministry, year of graduation, etc. can be found in the chapter 'Looking to the Future', within the section titled 'Remaining in Youth Ministry'. Recommendations for changes in this area can also be found in this section.

Forms of Employment

The Alumni Survey also asked graduates to “*briefly summarize your work history since DVULI in a few words, using job type and duration. For example, you might say ‘Youth minister for two years, then music minister for one year’*”. Table 6.6 provides a condensed summary of these findings. While a significant proportion of graduates provided this information according to our suggested example, a large number of graduates either didn’t provide years along with their job titles or provided their entire life work history rather than only work history since graduating from DVULI. This made it impossible for us to create a reliable profile of graduates’ collective job histories.

TABLE 6.6

WORK HISTORY SINCE DVULI	
Youth Ministry/Leadership	55%
Miscellaneous	32%
Administration (generally church-related)	29%
Adult Ministry	23%
Other Work for the Church	13%
Education	12%

It was clear, however, that a large proportion of graduates had worked in at least two or more positions since graduating from DVULI (resulting in percentage totals greater than 100% in Table 6.6). Consistent with Figure 6.5 above, it was also clear that the majority of graduates had remained in some form of ministry-related employment since graduation, with the majority continuing in some form of youth ministry.

While describing their work history, graduates listed a number of different types of positions within all major categories. Within the Youth Ministry/Leadership category (55%), graduates listed work positions such as ‘Youth Pastor’, ‘Church Youth Director’, ‘Coordinator of At-Risk Kids Ministry’, ‘Youth Ministry Developer’, ‘Youth Basketball Coach’, or ‘Junior Staff Director’.

The Miscellaneous category (32%) contained the second highest number of respondents. These jobs were sometimes listed along with ministry jobs, indicating that graduates had been, or were currently bi-vocational. Examples of jobs included 'Computer', 'Community Relations', 'Army Officer', 'Janitorial', 'Barber', 'Insurance Agent', or 'Bank Worker'.

The Administration category (29%) often involved church-related positions but often did not list specific areas of work. Job titles included 'Associate Director', 'Staff Assistant', 'Board Member', or 'Gym Manager'.

The Adult Ministry category (23%) involved a wide variety of titles, including 'Family Minister', 'Church Planter', 'Senior Pastor', and 'Women's Ministry'.

The Other Work for the Church category (13%) included titles such as 'Music Ministry' and 'Pastor's Wife'.

The final major category, Education, involved 12 % of the respondents and included job titles such as 'College President', 'Substitute Teacher', and 'Community Education'.

Minor categories involved less than 1% each included Retail/Financial positions, Mentor, Mental Health/Substance Abuse, Criminal Justice, Volunteer, and Miscellaneous Leadership.

Given that graduates appear to work in a wide variety and number of positions following their graduation, we recommend that DVULI staff consider including more training to help graduates transition between job positions. This would appear to be a vital skill given the number of positions that many graduates have held following their graduation.

Weekly Hours in Ministry

Graduates were also asked to estimate the average weekly hours they worked in the last year in youth ministry (paid and volunteer), other ministry (paid and volunteer), and other work (paid and volunteer). Table 6.7 shows the average number of weekly hours that graduates worked in each of those categories. Taken together, graduates were likely to work an average of 15 – 17 hours per week in paid positions and between four and ten hours per week in volunteer positions. The standard deviation shows that there was a wide range in the number of hours worked per week by the graduates. Please note that almost all respondents provided answers for this set of questions, but often worked within multiple forms of ministry each week so placed hours within more than one category, so totals do not add up correctly. So, for example, a graduate might have worked part-time in a paid ministry but also volunteered each week in some other form of ministry as well.

TABLE 6.7

TYPE OF MINISTRY	# of Grads	Average	Stand. Dev.
Youth ministry – Paid	214	17.51	20.74
Youth ministry – Volunteer	225	10.62	18.37
Other ministry – Paid	212	15.18	20.9
Other ministry – Volunteer	214	8.89	16.04
Other work - Paid Hours	198	17.81	22.59
Other work – Volunteer	182	4.16	8.75

Further examination of graduates' responses (not shown in graph format) shows that 33.1% of graduates did not work any hours in paid youth ministry, while 31.9% worked between 1 – 29 hours per week, and 35.0% of graduates worked 30 or more hours per week in paid youth ministry.

Examination of the number of volunteer hours of youth ministry that graduates worked per week showed that 21.3% did not work any volunteer hours, while only 6.3% worked 30 or more hours per week in volunteer positions. The strong majority of graduates (72.4%) volunteered between 1 and 29 hours per week in youth ministry.

Inspection of the number of paid hours in other ministry positions that graduates worked per week showed that 49.5% did not work any paid hours, 19.3% worked between one and 29 hours, and 31.2% worked 30 or more hours per week in other ministry positions.

Exploration of the number of volunteer hours in other ministry positions that graduates worked per week indicated that 22.4% did not work any volunteer hours, 71.0% worked between one and 29 hours, and 6.6% worked 30 or more hours per week in other voluntary ministry positions.

Examination of the number of paid hours of other non-ministry related work that graduates worked per week showed that 41.4% did not work any paid hours, 25.3% worked between one

and 29 hours per week, and 33.3% worked 30 or more hours per week in other paid non-ministry related positions.

Inspection of the number of volunteer hours of other non-ministry related work that graduates completed showed that 59.9% did not work any volunteer hours, 36.8% volunteered between one and 29 hours per week, and 3.3% volunteered 30 or more hours per week in other non-ministry related work.

Because respondents could select the number of hours worked each week across all categories, the total number of ministry hours was combined together (the 'other work' category was excluded for these comparisons). The 260 graduates who answered this question were divided into four groups to better understand the possible differences between graduates who worked different levels of volunteer or paid hours in any form of ministry each week. The first group, which we call 'Low-Time', worked between zero and 11 hours per week and accounted for 20% of the graduates (about one-fifth of this Low-Time group (20 respondents) said that they were averaging *zero* hours per week in ministry). The second group, called 'Part-Time', worked between 11 and 30 hours per week and accounted for 22% of the graduates. The third group, labeled 'Full-Time', worked between 31 and 50 hours per week and accounted for 33% of the graduates. Finally, the fourth group, which we called 'Overtime', averaged over 51 hours per week and accounted for 25% of the graduates.

While this information is interesting, it does little to help us understand what the differences between and within these groups might mean. Readers are referred to the chapter titled 'Looking to the Future' in the section called 'Hours per Week in Ministry' in order to see comparisons in these categories across a whole range of Alumni Survey questions.

Summary

Graduates responded to a series of questions relating to how DVULI training had helped them make improvements in their ministries. The large majority of graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the Initiative have helped them improve in job performance, job satisfaction, and earning the respect of supervisors and colleagues. In addition, about half of all graduates Agreed or Strongly Agreed that DVULI training had helped them to earn a better position and increase their personal income (it was unclear if this represented the same group of people, however).

Graduates were also asked whether the Initiative helped them to remain in ministry. Approximately 80% of all graduates either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with this statement, with almost 70% stating that they had remained specifically in youth ministry either consistently or with some interruptions since completing DVULI training. Only 2.2% stated that they were not involved in any kind of ministry.

Graduates worked in a wide variety and number of work positions following their graduation, including Youth Ministry/Leadership, Miscellaneous, Administration (mostly

church-related), Adult Ministry, Other Work for the Church, and Education. Given that graduates appear to work in a wide variety and number of positions following their graduation, we recommend that DVULI staff consider including more training to help graduates transition between job positions. This would appear to be a vital skill given the number of positions that many graduates have held following their graduation.

Graduates were also asked to estimate the average weekly hours they worked in the last year in youth ministry (paid and volunteer), other ministry (paid and volunteer), and other work (paid and volunteer). Taken together, graduates were likely to work an average of 15 – 17 hours per week in paid positions and between four and ten hours per week in volunteer positions. It should be noted that almost all respondents provided answers for this set of questions, but often worked within multiple forms of ministry each week so placed hours within more than one category.

Further examination of graduates' responses (not shown in graph format) shows that 33.1% of graduates did not work any hours in paid youth ministry, while 31.9% worked between 1 – 29 hours per week, and 35.0% of graduates worked 30 or more hours per week in paid youth ministry.

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Exploration of the number of volunteer hours in other ministry positions that graduates worked per week indicated that 22.4% did not work any volunteer hours, 71.0% worked between one and 29 hours, and 6.6% worked 30 or more hours per week in other voluntary ministry positions. Readers can refer to the full chapter summary for a report on paid and volunteer hours that graduates worked in non-ministry positions.

Researchers also conducted another comparison in which they combined the total number of hours worked (paid or volunteer) each week across all categories. Approximately 20% of graduates worked between zero and 11 ministry hours per week, 22% worked between 11 and 30 hours per week in ministry, 33% of graduates worked between 31 and 50 ministry hours per week, and the remaining 25% averaged over 51 hours per week in ministry.

Chapter 7

Personal and Ministry Challenges and Frustrations

While virtually all of the graduates who participated in the focus groups and responded to the Alumni Survey found the DVULI training to be rewarding, they also experienced some challenges and frustrations within the program itself and when they returned to their families, ministries, churches, and communities. Some of these challenges were mentioned in earlier chapters as part of comments relating to specific values or skills. Some of these challenges could be expected while others were a result of factors from outside the DVULI training. Challenges and frustrations do not always end in defeat but can result in growth both in personal life and ministry. This information can also be used by DVULI staff to better understand how to better prepare future graduates to face these challenges and frustrations that are likely to emerge.

In order to provide the graduates of the DVULI program an opportunity to describe the challenges and frustrations experienced and to learn from their experiences, the DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates to comment on the following statement: *“Please briefly describe: 1) the most frustrating challenge you have faced as a result of the DVULI training, and 2) let us know if DVULI could have done something differently to address it.”* Responses to the first part of this question are described below. Responses to the second part of the question are located at the end of the chapter titled *Looking to the Future* since these suggestions connect to potential modifications to the program in future years.

As with all qualitative analyses, the responses to these short answers were analyzed and sorted into themes using a codebook to guide the analysis. The analysis resulted in 353 individual quotes from the 226 graduates who chose to answer this question in the Alumni Survey. The following are the major themes that emerged as a result of the analysis in order of the highest occurring theme to the lowest. These themes include challenges and frustrations regarding: 1) resistance to DVULI ideas, 2) changes in thinking, 3) explaining DVULI training to colleagues, 4) applying DVULI to real life, 5) staying connected with DVULI graduates and staff, and 6) transitions experienced between ministries.

Following the major themes, the minor themes are listed in order of highest to lowest occurring themes related to challenges and frustrations experienced by graduates following the DVULI training. These include: 1) difficulty following through with breakthrough plans, 2) changes in life direction, 3) changes in job stability and performance, and 4) frustrations with time required to train others.

Finally, each section includes several representative quotes from focus group participants. Because the comments they made were consistent with the themes found in the survey comments, we did not attempt to put these comments in separate sections.

Resistance to DVULI Ideas

The first major theme that emerged as a result of the analysis was related to the challenges and frustrations experienced by graduates as a result of the resistance they received from individuals who did not receive the training. Of the 353 individual comments, 15.7% were related to this major theme. As graduates returned to their ministries and personal lives, some of the values and concepts learned did not fit with those of their peers, family members and colleagues. They encountered various forms of resistance to their ideas and methods of ministry. Examples of general comments include:

"Trying to not be critical of others when their operational decisions come into conflict with the core values...especially when they've "always" done things that way."

"The concept of accountability was new and many were apprehensive in embracing and/or realizing the importance of this core value."

"It's not the program - it snags when people who are set in their ways refuse to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I can honestly say that I am not frustrated with the program at all."

"I struggled with being critical because going through this process caused me to start thinking differently and I'm looking at the ministry that I'm engaged in and I'm thinking—'wow, how come they're not getting it? We've been doing this for so long'." ~ Chicago

Upon further analysis of this theme, several additional minor themes emerged, including resistance from: 1) friends, family, peers, and colleagues (outside work), 2) peers and youth at work, 3) leaders/supervisors, and 4) their church/organization. The DVULI graduates first discussed the challenges and frustrations that resulted from friends, family, peers and colleagues resisting their new knowledge and learning.

Friends, Family, Peers, and Colleagues

It appeared from the responses that the graduates wanted the people closest to them to appreciate and value the principles and skills learned in the training as they had. However, attempts to share their excitement were met with confusion, frustration, and sometimes disinterest. Often this occurred because their loved ones had no context for understanding and appreciating the transformational nature of the new values and principles. In other cases it might have occurred because the 15-month training program was time consuming and emotionally draining for the participants, sometimes displacing additional life burdens on others or providing pampering and rich new relationships while leaving family and friends behind to manage things while they were gone.

“One the most difficult challenges we faced was being able to share the concepts with my wife so that we could stay on the same page.”

“The most frustrating challenge was when we had a group evaluation of the individual leader. I was told by a majority of the class that I was out of place in ministry because I established a church in the area I was ministered in. It was very hard for me to stand in front of the class and listen to various ones to tell me I was out of line in my calling. I was called of God to pastor the church of youth and parents who were rejected from mainstream churches. They did not receive them because they were so poor and needed training. I’m so glad that when I had heard all the negative reports about my calling, I was very determined to go forward in ministry. Now because I have continued pastoring, many of our youth have received college scholarships and now have graduated and are living successful lives. I’m so glad I obeyed God rather than man.”

“I think the difficulty with it is that you learn so much and you want to apply it, but you find yourself in situations where other people are not willing to give up the stuff that they own to adapt the new information. They’ve never done it that way before. They’re stuck in their junk and so to take it and apply it in a situation - unless you’re an executive director and can begin to just put the information out there from the top down.... Because if you’re trying to work with somebody above you or somebody who is lateral to where you are, but not open to the information, it’s not going happen. ~ Denver

Peers and Youth at Work

Graduates also revealed their frustrations with experiencing resistance from peers at work and the youth participating in their ministries. They encountered opposition as they tried to implement new DVULI-based activities and techniques to counter the apparent imperfections they were able to see in their programs. Both staff and youth were opposed to changes in several instances.

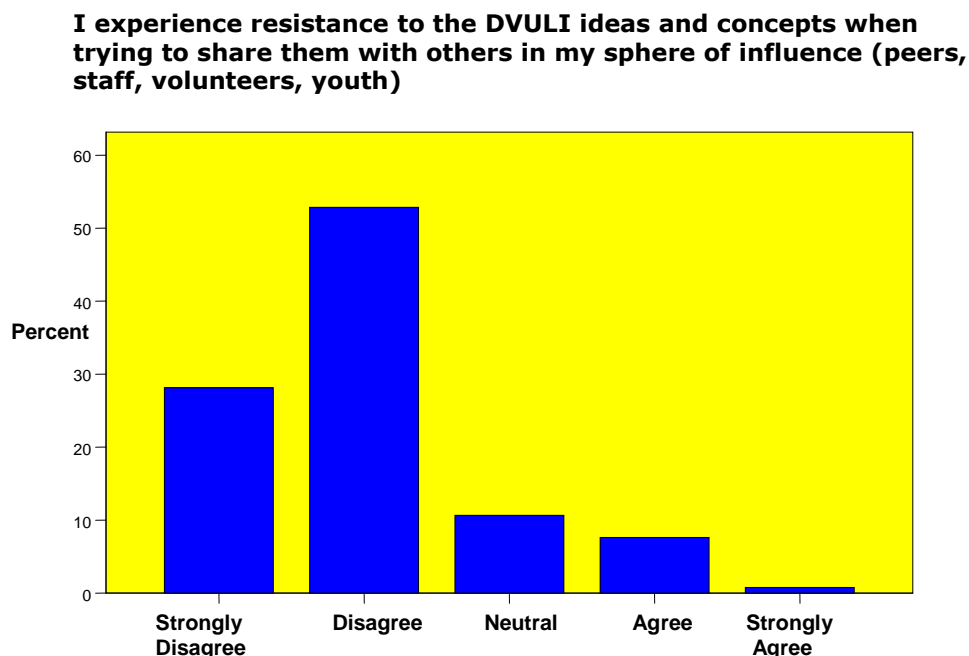
"It had been frustrating trying to apply the principles of leverage while in the position I was in because of the groundwork that had to be completed against some of the territorial feelings among agencies and churches. There was also the biggest challenge of having this training revealing to me what was so out of balance, but being in a position where it seemed those in the organization were operating out of an atmosphere of imbalance. This caused tension and resistance to the introduction of balance and even communicated guilt if you did not continue to operate on a level of imbalance."

"The fact that other staff members haven't fully embraced things I have taught."

"The most frustrating challenge is to get our youth to be consistent."

To gain a better sense of the extent of this problem, the Alumni Survey specifically asked graduates to respond to the statement: *"I experience resistance to the DVULI ideas and concepts when trying to share them with others in my sphere of influence (peers, staff, volunteers, youth)."* Figure 7.1 shows that the majority of participants (81.1%) did not experience resistance when sharing DVULI concepts with those in their sphere of influence.

Figure 7.1



However, 8.4% of the 263 graduates who responded to this statement Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they had experienced resistance from peers, staff, volunteers, or youth. The discrepancy between this percentage and the 15.7% who selected this as a major theme likely has to do with a somewhat lower number of graduates who responded to the qualitative question (240 responses) compared to those who responded to this question (271 responses). It is also possible that those who did provide written responses were somewhat more likely to consider this issue carefully when providing feedback, thus increasing the response percentage.

Leaders or Supervisors

The next minor theme that emerged was related to graduates' frustrations with leaders/supervisors. This theme was small since many of the graduates mentioned their church or their organizations, but did not specifically mention their leaders or supervisors. The graduates said that their experience was frustrating because their supervisors did not readily change their thoughts or behaviors when presented with the knowledge the graduates had gained from DVULI.

"The biggest challenge I have faced is trying to get my superiors to change their thinking or change a system that has been non-effective."

"The most challenging is my church and its leadership. It is an old establishment and comfortable with the way things are. Not too open to change or better yet, getting rid of dead leadership ways."

"My pastor still hasn't grabbed it yet, I'm still working on that but as far as me to go out and help speak more to the people and the younger people that live around the neighborhood, we've asked them to help us out with that, to go out and do ministry work and the younger ones are getting more involved with church and we're helping them out with school and stuff like that so they're not hating us as much because we're helping them out. ~ Houston

"And then I started understanding the frustration because when you receive all this knowledge and when you go back and you're like 'Golly, we're not really doing what the Word says we should be doing' and you start second-guessing your leadership and pastors, you're like 'you all are some knuckleheads'."
~ Houston

Church or Organization

Other graduates explained that their frustration came from the church/organization in which they worked. These graduates' responses were about coming back from the training and meeting the resistance from their churches or organizations in which they were implementing the new tools learned. The resistance was of an uncomfortable nature from the people who were not interested in changing anything. These people may have appeared receptive to

hearing about what needed to be changed, but when the time came for actual change, those same people were not so interested in what the graduates had to say.

“The most frustrating challenge I had was coming back to a ministry that did not want to change.”

“The most frustrating challenge has been working in an environment where the church is a commuter church with a commuter mentality and the church doesn’t realize it. The church is committed to what it calls ‘in-reach’, some may call it discipleship. They cater to members only and really don’t have a desire to physically bring in non-members for fear of the ‘unchurched’ influencing the member youth in a negative way, based on a few past instances.”

“The organization I was with was not interested in doing things differently. We had become territorial and responsive as opposed to being forward thinkers; we were maintaining. My mentor during the process really helped me navigate through it.”

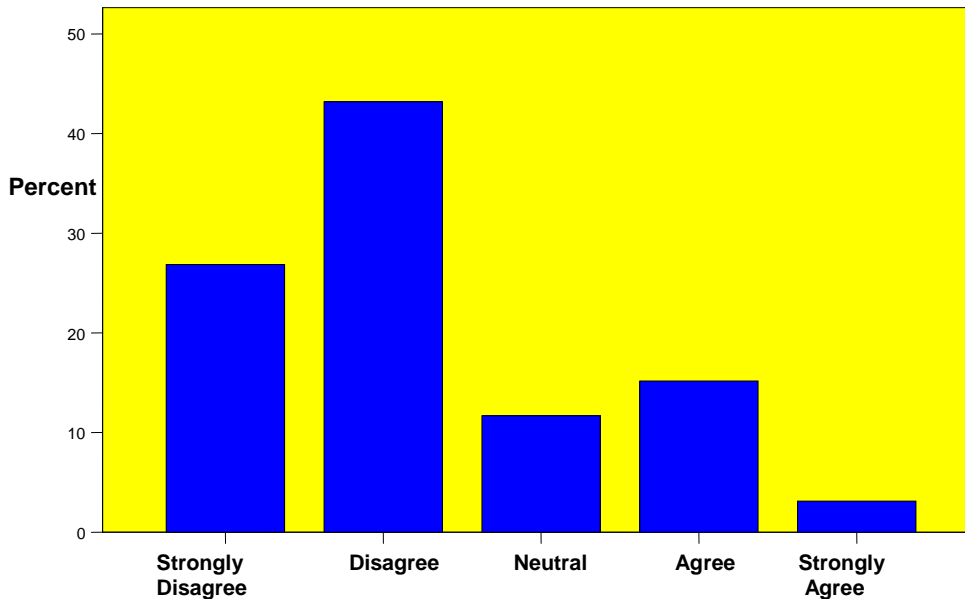
“They don’t know what I’m talking about and it’s like so many from across the nation will leave where they were because their organization is not ready for that change, or not willing to listen to them as youth workers or leaders.... So I think the down side is that other organizations that you may be a part of during the time that you go through DVULI, not being ready themselves to nurture you in your process.” ~ Grand Rapids

An analysis of graduates’ responses to the DVULI Alumni Survey statement: *“I experience resistance to the DVULI ideas and concepts when trying to share them with ministry and work superiors”* also support the graduates’ written comments regarding the resistance experienced from supervisors and ministry organizations. In figure 7.2 it is apparent that 70% of graduates Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement.

However, 18.3% of the 271 graduates who responded to this statement Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they experienced resistance to DVULI concepts from work and ministry superiors. Given that almost one-fifth of the respondents experienced such resistance, DVULI staff may wish to consider developing training activities that would help participants anticipate and deal effectively with such resistance. Readers can find more details regarding differences (or lack thereof) between graduates for this question in the areas of gender, age, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, and several other variables in the report chapter titled “Looking to the Future”.

FIGURE 7.2

I experience resistance to the DVULI ideas and concepts when trying to share them with ministry and work superiors



Changes in Thinking

This theme related to how the graduates started to think differently as a result of their DeVos experience, sometimes leading to a personal struggle within themselves. Of the total responses (353), 13.4% of the comments were related to challenges and frustrations related to changes in thinking. Some of the graduates mentioned that these frustrations eventually helped them begin to take on a new perspective and priorities in regards to spirituality. New perspectives emerged on the resources that God could provide to ministry. Some were able to move out of a spiritual rut and into a more active spirituality with the DVULI training. Others were able to see how changes in thinking could help them connect with others in ministry.

“The spiritual part of ministry and not too much about success. To grow closer to God and not rely too much on methods, resources, and people. How to put God and his resources at first hand and the rest falls into place through trust.”

“I have experienced what the psychologists call ‘disequilibrium’ – the disruption of inner tranquility when old habits and thoughts are confronted by new and different thoughts. This is a good thing though! I was stuck in a place that was draining me spiritually. I was working non-stop and for hours on top of hours, yet I was getting little return....”

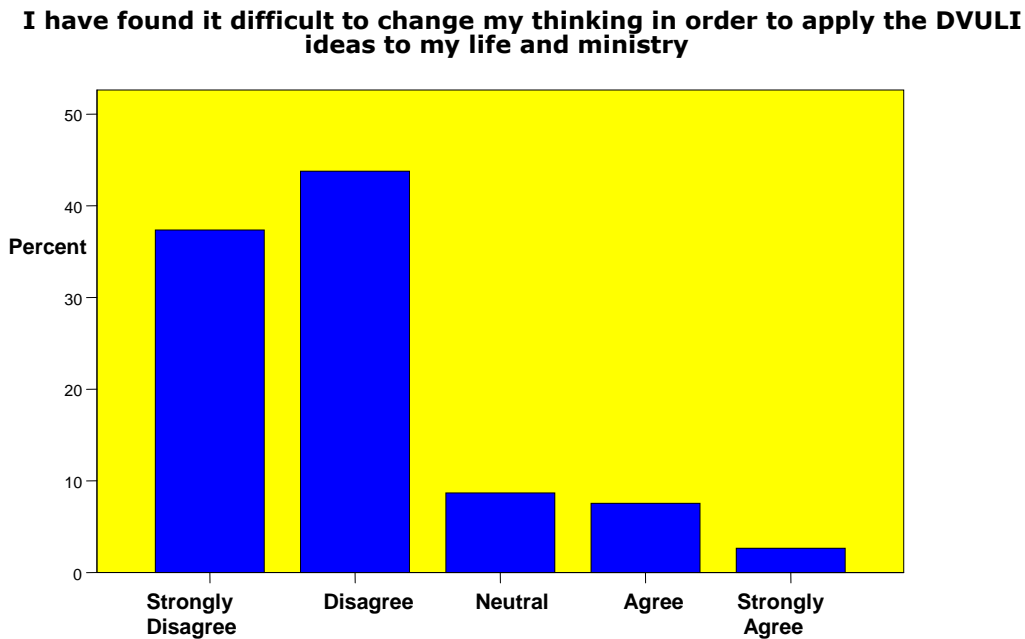
"My most frustrating challenge I faced as a result of the DVULI training was learning to listen to the Spirit, and when it said to move, turn or change, I learned through obedience to plan, prepare, and grow in development to go to the next dimension for myself and my ministry."

"I think going through DeVos...I had this idea of ministry and I was working hard at it and about ¾ of the way through the Initiative it just kind of went caput and I realized God was not blessing my effort and so I even approached Ginny and said, 'Should I even stay in the Initiative at this point?' and she said, 'Yeah, stay in, and wait and see what happens'. So I did and right after the Initiative was done, just kind of on sabbatical to figure out what next and I was approached by a ministry I never had any interest in doing."

I think DeVos is such a - I don't know if you want to say this - but it's almost too impactful in the fact that it's like throwing that rock in the water and the water goes like this [gestures to show water scattering out], and it takes awhile for it to come back. Obviously that happens as you stay in the water, but for us, for me, it blew me out of my ministry, out of my church and out of my denomination." ~ Denver

In the Alumni Survey, graduates were also asked to respond to the statement: *"I have found it difficult to change my thinking in order to apply the DVULI ideas to my life and ministry."* The results of their responses are displayed in Figure 7.3. Of the 271 graduates who responded to this statement, 10.1% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that this was difficult. However, 81.1 % Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement. From the tone of the qualitative comments, it was clear that the frustration they experienced in their thinking often led to some sort of ministry or spiritual breakthrough that benefited them. Drawing from suggestions found at the end of this chapter, DVULI staff may wish to consider helping recruits to mentally and emotionally prepare for this transformational process, perhaps by having several DVULI graduates describe the transformation they experienced as a result of their training. Readers can find more details regarding differences (or lack thereof) between graduates for this question in the areas of gender, age, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, and several other variables in the report chapter titled "Looking to the Future".

FIGURE 7.3



Difficulty Explaining DVULI Training to Colleagues

Some graduates expressed challenges and frustrations with actually explaining the DVULI training to their colleagues. Of the total responses (353), 12.7% of the comments were related to challenges in this area. This major theme reveals that graduates returned to their places of ministry and were excited about the skills and values they learned. However, when they tried to explain to their colleagues the importance and value of the training they had received, they were met with less enthusiasm than expected. Such a challenge is often the case when people are exposed to a whole new vocabulary and, indeed, a whole new philosophy of life and ministry.

"To try to get other people to see/understand what I now see/understand."

"Trying to explain the change in my life and ministry."

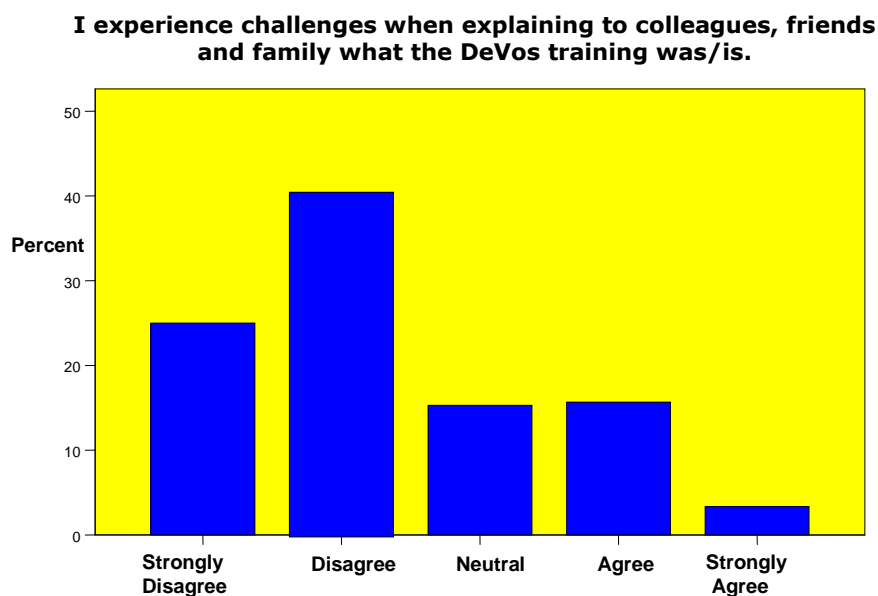
"I have sometimes found it difficult if others did not see the DVULI training as important as I do. Sometimes it is hard to collaborate with others or teach them core values if they don't see the value."

"The most frustrating [challenge] was trying to bring change in the paradigm of leadership I was in. There had to be a change and my supervisors were not ready for it so at God's time things changed and we are moving forward. Like many in the DeVos program, life came and ministry changed."

"I'm in a traditional setting and my first year after graduating I encountered tremendous frustration, one because my awareness had been heightened and then I began to look at how do you apply this new information without tearing up the church, without causing a split in the church because you're the new kid on the block or you think you know it all, so how do you make that transition?"

~ Houston

FIGURE 7.4



In the DVULI Alumni Survey, graduates were asked to rate the degree to which they “experience challenges when explaining to colleagues, friends and family what the DVULI training was/is.” As seen in Figure 7.4, 65.7% of graduates Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement suggesting they had not experienced challenges and frustrations when explaining DVULI while 19.1% of graduates Agreed or Strongly Agreed they had experienced these challenges. Similar to a recommendation given earlier, DVULI staff may wish to consider developing training activities that would help participants anticipate and deal effectively with such resistance, perhaps with role plays or other interactive exercises. Readers can find more details regarding differences (or lack thereof) between graduates for this question in the areas of gender, age, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, and several other variables in the report chapter titled “Looking to the Future”.

Applying DVULI to Real Life

Another theme that emerged as a result of the analysis revealed that some of the graduates were challenged and frustrated with applying DVULI to real life situations. Of the 353 individual

responses related to this challenge, 12.4% fit into this theme. For some, it was one thing to hear experts talk about values and skills in a seminar setting and quite another to apply sometimes abstract language, values and skills to real-life situations and ministry settings.

"Potentially, there could have actually been too much of a good thing with DVULI. There was so much to implement that in my case, there was the paralysis of 'what to attack first?' at times. However, in saying that, the reason it was so overwhelming is that the material was so rich and thought-provoking; hence my use of 'too much of a good thing.'"

"Not being able to use my new knowledge in actual ministry."

"You know for me, I think one of the challenges I came across was when I was teaching about mentoring piece and then everybody's got this information and they are like, 'Yeah, this is really affirming, this is good stuff', but then how does the rubber hit the road, how do you make the connection, how do you find a mentor? You need to get a mentor." ~ Albuquerque

"...why don't we teach what we learn? We tried that the first year and it didn't really work that well. We were able to teach each other, but then we weren't able to." ~ Chicago

"...we've all been there [DVULI training], we've all seen it, we see all of these nice strategies, but at the end of day, we're still knocking on doors. My question was 'What was the purpose of creating a strategy plan, a breakthrough plan? Was it just a nice educational thing to know or what is our purpose at the end of urban staff to know that this is a way to sustain or maintain or whatever that is we call the ministry.'" ~ Denver

After further analysis of this theme, it was apparent that challenges and frustrations experienced by graduates with applying the DVULI training to real life could be further divided into sub-themes. Some graduates found it difficult to: 1) apply the core values with people in their team and 2) to understand and apply the skills learned in the training as a result of the fast pace of the program.

Apply Core Values with People in Their Team

Graduates' responses revealed their frustrations in applying the DeVos principles and core values with others in their team. Some found it challenging to teach their ministry partners the concepts learned in the DVULI training while others experienced the most difficulty with actually implementing the core values or being open minded when others did not make decisions that were in harmony with the core values that began to govern their lives.

"...[most] frustrating challenge is language transfer in order for our team to adopt and apply the values and planning I found that I may have understood the

concepts but getting others to fully grasp them in order to apply it was a little harder in order to get the most impact toward our objective.”

“The most frustrating challenge I have faced was having to choose between having a job or maintaining core values instilled through the DVULI process. Had it not been for the DVULI process, I probably would have chosen having a job. DVULI addressed the issue when they taught me core-values.”

“Trying not to be critical of others when their operational decisions come into conflict with the core values...especially when they’ve ‘always’ done things that way.”

Understand and Apply Skills Learned

Graduates also experienced challenges and frustrations with applying the principles and values they learned because they sometimes felt they were given too much information to manage in a short time. Some said that their frustrations were a result of not being able to use the information to the best of their ability due to the time constraints of the trainings. Others said that the trainings were so rich they had difficulty knowing where to start first. Finally, one focus group member expressed frustration that, while he had heard these principles before, he still didn’t always know how to apply them in real life settings.

“While the training was very detailed, practical, and beneficial, I think the need for repetition is very important. More importantly, for those of us who run organizations and work full-time jobs it was difficult to grasp and fully embrace all of the viable tools, speakers, etc...”

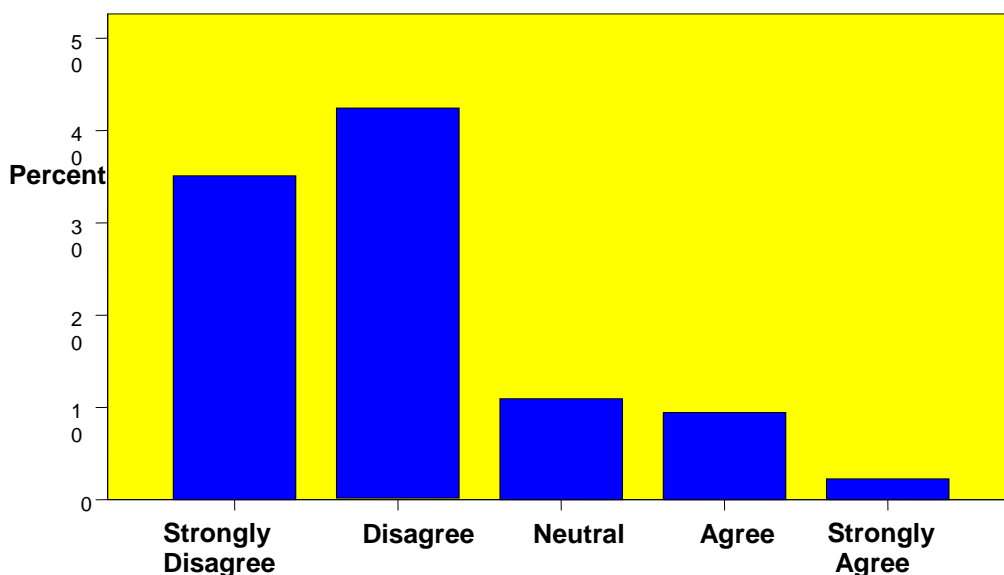
“Potentially, there could have actually been too much of a good thing with DVULI. There was so much to implement that in my case, there was the paralysis of ‘what to attack first?’ At times, however, in saying that, the reason it was so overwhelming is that the material was so rich and thought-provoking; hence my use of ‘too much of a good thing’.”

“The only frustrating thing to me was that it was so much information in such a short period of time.”

“I mean, it was great, we learned all these great things. But at the end of the day, how do we do it? Because I went through the process thinking - I was going to have a breakthrough plan and break through my plans, cuz I've been here for too long and I've heard all these things before - same things, different words. I went through thinking, “OK, there's got to be a way to do it, it can't be just rehearsal, so...for me, I just took it for what it was. It was a breakthrough plan, we're going to find out what we're made of and we're going to look at this thing, and this is the way the next 15 to 20 years of my life is going. ~ Denver

FIGURE 7.5

I have experienced difficulty applying the DVULI training concepts to real-life ministry situations



This finding was also explored through an analysis of graduates' responses to the DVULI Alumni Survey statement: *"I have experienced difficulty applying the DVULI training concepts to real-life ministry situations."* In Figure 7.5 it is evident that the majority of graduates (77.4%) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement.

However, 11.7% of the 272 graduates who responded to this statement either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that it was difficult to apply the DVULI concepts to real life situations. DVULI staff and trainers may wish to consider continuing to encourage graduates to draw on the collective wisdom of their mentors and other graduates in their city. As they brainstorm with these individuals, such interactions will help graduates to better understand and apply abstract DVULI concepts to real-life situations and settings. Readers can find more details regarding differences (or lack thereof) between graduates for this question in the areas of gender, age, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, and several other variables in the report chapter titled "Looking to the Future".

Staying Connected with DVULI Graduates and Staff

Difficulty staying connected with DVULI graduates and staff in a collaborative way emerged as an additional theme related to challenges and frustrations. Of the 353 comments generated from the analysis, 9.2% fit into this major theme. Graduates revealed frustrations with the city groups that did not come together as often they had felt necessary. Some of the graduates took

responsibility in not being as involved with their city group and others said that they never really connected with the people of their graduating class. Some expressed frustration that large metropolitan areas made connecting more difficult due to the large physical geography and space distances while others felt that they didn't have the support they needed to develop collaborative relationships with others in their community, particularly in the early years of the Initiative.

"The most challenging and frustrating to me was the lack of the group trained coming together and continuing to work together to address the needs of the at-risk youth of the Detroit area. I realize everyone is overcommitted but I had thought we built some lasting relationships and I miss them."

"... I simply wish I had stayed involved and engaged with my DVULI peers."

"I feel like a sense of failure in that area in terms of 'yeah, we're talking about doing these things', but we really haven't come together and actually done anything that I would think has impacted Albuquerque. I think on a smaller scale our lives do [create an impact] in some way, because we've taken what we've learned and maybe we're sharing it in our context, but in terms of really impacting the community at large, we got a long way to go, I think."

~ Albuquerque

"...our group, beyond the experience [DVULI training], never gelled very well. And they were so spread out across the city that you found it hard to find people of like-mind to connect with because you were, even though our group was Westside to the Northside..." ~ Chicago

"I think that we are not prepared - it's like we are given all this stuff and then [told to] go. There is no follow-up to help us facilitate. At first we had to kind of figure out 'OK, three years, what are we going to do?' Finally, after three years, we figure out what to do collaboratively. And it's like you're just kind of left to your own and it's like, yeah, they equipped us enough that we were able to [discover] 'Oh, that's what they were talking about'. And...now we know what collaboration really means. So you are kind of left to the wolves, so to speak, and kind of not really followed up with, except indirectly or informally." Grand Rapids

DVULI staff may wish to consider selecting smaller cities as training sites in order to help graduates connect more easily. They may also wish to increase the number of trainings per city to develop a critical mass of graduates for collaborating, networking, and developing sustainable change at a scale that will produce substantial impacts.

Transitions between Ministries

The responses that emerged within this theme were a reflection of how the graduates felt when transitioning from one ministry to another. Of the 353 total responses, 8.3% were related to this major theme. Most of the graduates agreed that when moving to something new, whether it was a new position in the same organization or a completely new organization or church and new position, the hardest part was adapting the DeVos principles to the new environment. However, most of the graduates agreed that the training was excellent and had been helpful no matter what circumstance they had found themselves in.

“My challenge wasn’t frustrating, just challenging. Moving away from traditional church ministry and focusing on neighborhood ministry partnering with other ministries and not being attached to a certain church or ministry.”

“The most frustrating challenge is that I now have to think again of the things I learned from DVULI and relate to my new role in the same organization I was in. It was easier to assess the system of the local ministry, because I knew it very well, but now in the national level, I’m not very familiar with its system of working and I have to take time to learn and try to assess the systems...”

“The most frustrating challenge has been my transitioning from one ministry to a new church plant ministry and starting from scratch. The training is continuing to be of great assistance but the church is just now beginning to have ministry resources be identified.”

“...it finally gave me a different perspective to remove myself from a ministry, a church and a denomination that were not going the same direction that I was. I felt very stuck and very unsure about where I was going before DeVos. DeVos really held me to say, ‘You know what, you have to make some decisions and then act on those decisions and stop sitting around, waiting for something to change that’s not going to change’. And so really now I’m in an amazing position because DeVos helped me get out of the place that was really a quagmire.

~ Denver

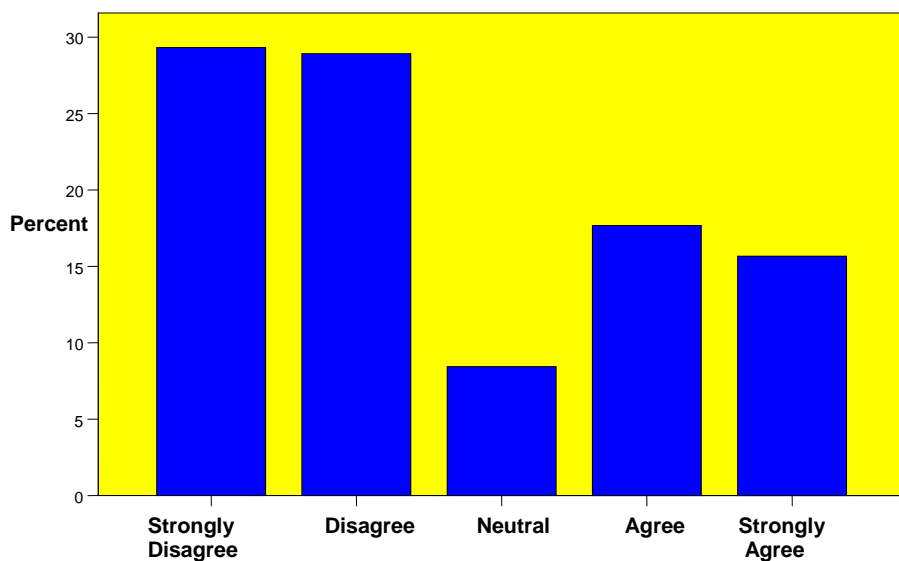
“For me it was just really empowering and a confidence builder and just gave me the extra empowerment to go back and question the ministry I was a part of and question the leadership and question how the system was working and how much I could push within that and how much I just needed to move on to a different system so to speak.” ~ Grand Rapids

In contrast to the relatively low number of written responses, a much higher percentage of graduates identified challenges when transitioning into other ministries. As can be seen in Figure 7.6, of the 271 graduates who responded to the statement, *“I have experienced a challenge transitioning from one place of ministry work to another”*, 33.4% of graduates Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement, making it the second-highest challenge in this section of

survey questions. In contrast, 58.2% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement. DVULI trainers may wish to consider ways to include practical suggestions on handling ministry transitions since such a high number of graduates struggled with this issue. Readers can find more details regarding differences (or lack thereof) between graduates for this question in the areas of gender, age, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, and several other variables in the report chapter titled “Looking to the Future”

FIGURE 7.6

I have experienced a challenge transitioning from one place of ministry work to another



The following section details the minor themes that emerged as a result of analyzing the graduates' responses to the statement: *"Please briefly describe the most frustrating challenge you have faced as a result of the DVULI training..."* These include: 1) difficulty following through with Breakthrough Plan, 2) changes in life direction, 3) changes in job stability and performance, and 4) frustrations with time required to train others.

Difficulty in Following through with Breakthrough Plan

Of the 353 total responses, 4.3% expressed difficulty in following through with their Breakthrough Plan following graduation. In this theme, graduates described their feelings and self-perceived shortcomings with fully incorporating the DVULI teachings into their lives and ministries.

"Not implementing fully my personal plan regarding balance..."

"Knowing in my head what to do and where to take the ministry but being unable to actually move it in that direction."

"It has been a while since I did DeVos and as a result of that and a job that takes a lot of time and attention, I haven't allowed myself to apply DVULI learning into my life. It is unfortunate but very true. Honestly returning to real life was the issue."

Changes in Life Direction

A small percentage of the graduates (4.2%) experienced a change in life direction after the DVULI training which led to various challenges and frustrations. Some of the graduates left their ministries and others experienced personal difficulties causing them to take a break or spend more time in other areas of their lives.

"My most frustrating challenge now is filtering through the many opportunities I now have to identify what I absolutely am called for."

"I think my biggest challenge was the fact that I was leaving the city that I went through the training with. Therefore I wasn't able to stay connected, stay focused, and cultivate those relationships that were built. And I have come to a new city with all new things....including marriage. I didn't really know how to stay the course of the DVULI training because I was trying to figure out what life looked like now."

In this minor theme, a few graduates expressed some confusion about life calling, including issues of taking a sabbatical or making a permanent exit from ministry. These themes were centered around the idea that, now that they were discovering new opportunities to do great

things, they were discovering that it was challenging to prioritize what was really in the Lord's plan, as well as find a balance in life and career.

"My most frustrating challenge now is filtering through the many opportunities I now have to identify what I absolutely am called for."

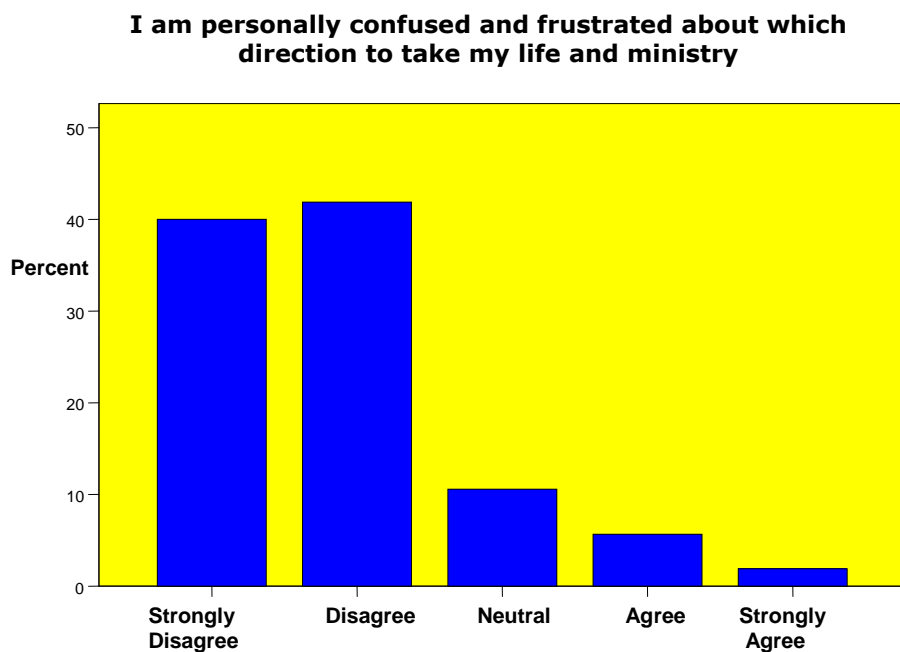
"Most frustrating challenge was leaving Youth ministry and not sure where to go next, but realized I needed a sabbatical (balance) for a few months."

"The most frustrating challenge I faced as a result of DVULI training - putting first things first and balancing my family, my ministry and my personal life."

Further illustrating these points, graduates' responses to the Alumni Survey statement: *"I am personally confused and frustrated about which direction to take my life and ministry"* also reflect that some graduates were challenged and frustrated with the potential and actual change in life direction as a result of the DVULI training. Figure 7.7 shows that while the majority of participants (81.9%) Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement, 7.6% of the participants Strongly Agreed or Agreed that they were confused and frustrated with which direction to take as they applied DVULI principles to their personal and ministry lives.

DVULI trainers may wish to consider ways to include practical suggestions on handling this sort of more existential challenge since a substantial number of graduates struggled with this issue. Readers can find more details regarding differences (or lack thereof) between graduates for this question in the areas of gender, age, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, and several other variables in the report chapter titled "Looking to the Future".

FIGURE 7.7



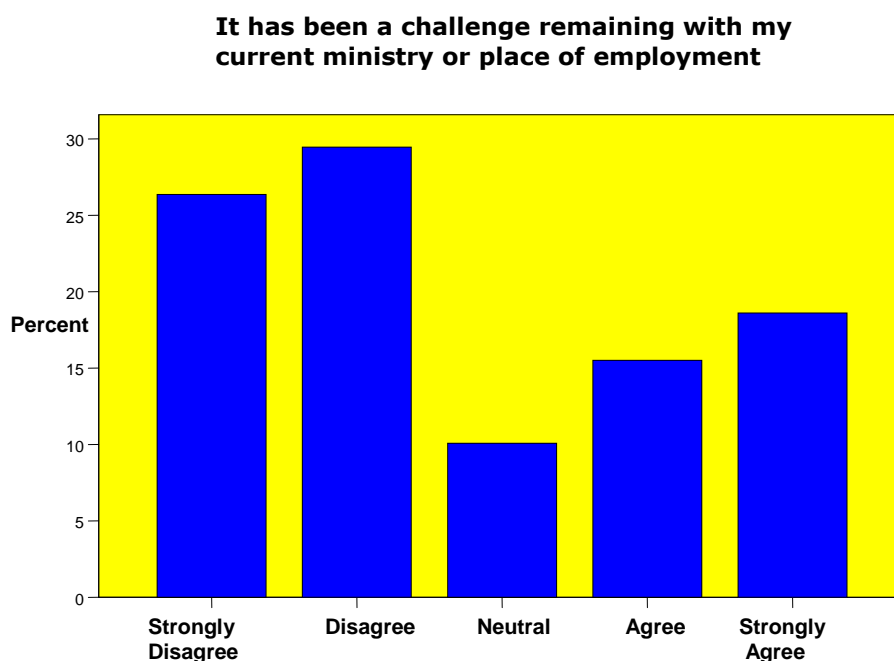
Changes in Job Stability and Performance

Other graduates of the Initiative experienced challenges and frustrations related to job stability and performance, with 3.3% of the total responses (353) emerging in this minor theme. The responses within this theme were related to various frustrations that have emerged within the graduates' careers relating to various life changes. This sometimes emerged when the graduates discovered that the people they were working with were not ready for the changes that the graduates knew needed to be made. This caused challenges and frustrations for the graduates and some felt that their mission was not being fulfilled.

"My job changed so I did not see how to continue implementing all that I learned. Plus, all the challenges of the new position gained priority. Recently, a member of DVULI did explain how my current experiences can still benefit the mission of DVULI. That has been helpful."

"The most frustrating challenge I had was trying to implement what I learned from DVULI without the support of a Breakthrough Board. As a result of a lack of available ministry resources our ministry has had to shut down. I was initially hurt and disappointed but now I recognize it as an opportunity for a new beginning. I think DVULI did a great job opening my eyes to the possibilities that are before me and for that I give God the Glory! I cherish the experience of DVULI!"

FIGURE 7.8



While graduates' written statements reflected this area to be a minor theme, graduates' responses to the Alumni Survey statement, *"It has been a challenge remaining with my current ministry or place of employment"* showed that this issue loomed large in many graduates' minds. Figure 7.8 shows that 34.1% of the graduates Agreed or Strongly Agreed that it was challenging to remain in their current ministry. In contrast, 55.8% of graduates Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement.

This question is the number one challenge that graduates listed within the challenges section of the survey, with over a third of graduates expressing concerns in this area. Given the large number of graduates with these concerns, DVULI trainers may wish to consider ways to include practical suggestions on more effectively handling the various challenges of remaining in a ministry setting since such a high number of graduates struggled with this issue. Readers can find more details regarding differences (or lack thereof) between graduates for this question in the areas of gender, age, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, and several other variables in the report chapter titled "Looking to the Future".

Time Consuming When Training Others

Graduates also expressed how slow the process was to actually train the people around them the skills and values they learned through the DVULI training. This minor theme was expressed in 1.5% of the total comments (353). While mentoring is one of the major focuses of DVULI, a few of the graduates found the process to be very time consuming and described it as a challenge.

"Building personal capacity of key leaders. It's time consuming and slow."

"I tried to teach my staff "scenario planning" at a retreat, but they had a hard time getting it. The key problem was not effective communication from me and not enough time devoted to really developing it."

No DVULI Frustrations or Challenges

Although graduates were asked specifically about frustrations and challenges experienced as a result of the DVULI training, 14.5% of the graduates used the space to tell the DVULI staff that they did not experience any difficulties and instead took the opportunity to describe how the training was a blessing.

"I honestly can say that I have not faced any frustrating challenges as a result of DVULI training."

"The most frustrating challenge was realizing how much time I wasted before DVULI as a poor communicator and leader. DeVos has 100% saved me in ministry."

Summary

In order to provide the graduates of the DVULI program an opportunity to describe the challenges and frustrations experienced and to learn from their experiences, the DVULI Alumni Survey asked graduates to comment on the following statement: *“Please briefly describe the most frustrating challenge you have faced as a result of the DVULI training.* The analysis resulted in 353 individual quotes from the 226 graduates who chose to answer this question in the Alumni Survey. Challenges and frustrations were broken into six major themes and four minor themes.

The first major theme, *Resistance to DVULI Ideas*, was related to the challenges and frustrations experienced by graduates as a result of the resistance they received from individuals who did not receive the training. A total of 15.7% of the comments were related to this theme. As graduates returned to their ministries and personal lives, some of the values and concepts learned did not fit with those of their peers, family members and colleagues. They encountered various forms of resistance to their ideas and methods of ministry from: 1) friends, family, peers, and colleagues (outside work), 2) peers and youth at work, 3) leaders/supervisors, and 4) their church/organization. Attempts to share their excitement were met with confusion, frustration, and sometimes disinterest. Often this occurred because those around them had no context for understanding and appreciating the transformational nature of the new values and principles. In addition, 18.3% of the 271 graduates who responded to the survey question *“I experience resistance to the DVULI ideas and concepts when trying to share them with ministry and work superiors”* either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they experienced resistance to DVULI concepts from work and ministry superiors. Given that almost one-fifth of the respondents experienced such resistance, DVULI staff may wish to consider developing training activities that would help participants anticipate and deal effectively with such resistance, perhaps with role plays or other interactive exercises.

The second major theme, *Changes in Thinking*, related to how the graduates started to think differently as a result of their DeVos experience, sometimes leading to a personal struggle within themselves. A total of 13.4% of the comments were related to challenges and frustrations related to changes in thinking. Some of the graduates mentioned that these frustrations eventually helped them begin to take on a new perspective and priorities in regards to spirituality. New perspectives emerged on the resources that God could provide to ministry. Some were able to move out of a spiritual rut and into a more active spirituality with the DVULI training. Others were able to see how changes in thinking could help them connect with others in ministry. In addition, 10.1% of all graduates Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the Alumni Survey statement: *“I have found it difficult to change my thinking in order to apply the DVULI ideas to my life and ministry.”* Drawing from suggestions found at the end of this chapter, DVULI staff may wish to consider helping recruits to mentally and emotionally prepare for this transformational process, perhaps by having several DVULI graduates describe the transformation they experienced as a result of their training.

The third major theme, *Explaining DVULI Training to Colleagues*, was mentioned in 12.7% of graduates' comments. This major theme reveals that graduates returned to their homes and places of ministry and were excited about the skills and values they learned. However, when they tried to convince others of the importance and value of the training they had received, they were met with less enthusiasm than expected. Such a challenge is often the case when people are exposed to a whole new vocabulary and, indeed, a whole new philosophy of life and ministry. In addition, when asked to rate the degree to which they "*experience challenges when explaining to colleagues, friends and family what the DVULI training was/is*", 19.1% of all graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they had experienced these challenges. Similar to a recommendation given earlier, DVULI staff may wish to consider developing training activities that would help participants anticipate and deal effectively with such resistance, perhaps with role plays or other interactive exercises.

The fourth major theme, *Applying DVULI to Real Life*, was discussed in 12.4% of graduates' comments. For some, it was one thing to hear experts talk about values and skills in a seminar setting and quite another to apply sometimes abstract language, values and skills to real-life situations and ministry settings. Some graduates found it difficult to apply the core values with people in their team and others found it challenging to understand and apply the skills learned in the training due to the fast pace of the program. In addition, when asked to rate the degree to which "*I have experienced difficulty applying the DVULI training concepts to real-life ministry situations*", 11.7% of the 272 graduates who responded to this statement either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that it was difficult to apply the DVULI concepts to real life situations. DVULI staff and trainers may wish to consider continuing to encourage graduates to draw on the collective wisdom of their mentors and other graduates in their city. As they brainstorm with these individuals, such interactions will help graduates to better understand and apply abstract DVULI concepts to real-life situations and settings.

The fifth major theme, *Staying Connected with DVULI Graduates and Staff*, was discussed in 9.2% of graduates' comments. Graduates revealed frustrations with the city groups that did not come together as often they had felt necessary. Some of the graduates took responsibility in not being as involved with their city group and others said that they never really connected with the people of their graduating class. In contrast to the relatively low number of written responses, a much higher percentage of graduates identified challenges when transitioning into other ministries. In addition, when asked to respond to the statement "*I have experienced a challenge transitioning from one place of ministry work to another*", 33.4% of graduates Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement, making it the second-highest challenge in this section of survey questions. DVULI staff may wish to consider selecting smaller cities as training sites in order to help graduates connect more easily. They may also wish to increase the number of trainings per city to develop a critical mass of graduates for collaborating, networking, and developing sustainable change at a scale that will produce substantial impacts. In addition, DVULI trainers may wish to consider ways to include practical suggestions on handling ministry transitions since such a high number of graduates struggled with this issue.

The final major theme, *Transitions between Ministries*, was identified by 8.3% of graduates' comments. Most of the graduates agreed that when moving to something new, whether it was a new position in the same organization or a completely new organization or church and new position, the hardest part was adapting the DeVos principles to the new environment. However, most of the graduates agreed that the training was excellent and had been helpful no matter what circumstance they had found themselves in. In addition, when asked to respond to the statement "*I have experienced a challenge transitioning from one place of ministry work to another*", 33.4% of graduates Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement, making it the second-highest challenge in this section of survey questions. DVULI trainers may wish to consider ways to include practical suggestions on handling ministry transitions since one-third of all graduates struggled with this issue.

The first minor theme, *Difficulty in Following through with Breakthrough Plan*, was mentioned in 4.3% of graduates' comments. In this theme, graduates described their feelings and self-perceived shortcomings with fully incorporating the DVULI teachings into their lives and ministries. No recommendations are being made for this section.

The second minor theme, *Changes in Life Direction*, was discussed in 4.2% of graduates' comments. Graduates described experiencing a change in life direction after the DVULI training which led to various challenges and frustrations. Some of the graduates left their ministries and others experienced personal difficulties causing them to take a break or spend more time in other areas of their lives. A few graduates expressed some confusion about life calling, including issues of taking a sabbatical or making a permanent exit from ministry. These themes were centered around the idea that, now that they were discovering new opportunities to do great things, they were discovering that it was challenging to prioritize what was really in the Lord's plan, as well as find a balance in life and career. In addition, when asked to respond to the statement "*I am personally confused and frustrated about which direction to take my life and ministry*", 7.6% of the participants Strongly Agreed or Agreed that they were confused and frustrated with which direction to take as they applied DVULI principles to their personal and ministry lives. DVULI trainers may wish to consider ways to include practical suggestions on handling this sort of more existential challenge since a substantial number of graduates struggled with this issue.

The third minor theme, *Changes in Job Stability and Performance*, was mentioned in 3.3% of graduates' responses. The responses within this theme were related to various frustrations that have emerged within the graduates' careers relating to various life changes. This sometimes emerged when the graduates discovered that the people they were working with were not ready for the changes that the graduates knew needed to be made. This caused challenges and frustrations for the graduates and some felt that their mission was not being fulfilled. While graduates' written statements reflected this area to be a minor theme,

graduates' responses to the Alumni Survey statement, "*It has been a challenge remaining with my current ministry or place of employment*" showed that this issue loomed large in many graduates' minds, with 34.1% of the graduates stating that they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that it was challenging to remain in their current ministry. This question is the number one challenge that graduates listed within the challenges section of the survey, with over a third of graduates expressing concerns in this area. Given the large number of graduates with these concerns, DVULI trainers may wish to consider ways to include practical suggestions on more effectively handling the various challenges of remaining in a ministry setting since such a high number of graduates struggled with this issue.

The fourth minor theme, *Time Consuming When Training Others*, was mentioned in 1.5% of graduates' responses. While mentoring is one of the major focuses of DVULI, a few of the graduates found the process to be very time consuming and described it as a challenge. No recommendations are being made for this theme.

Finally, although graduates were asked specifically about frustrations and challenges experienced as a result of the DVULI training, 14.5% of the graduates used the space to tell the DVULI staff that they did not experience any difficulties and instead took the opportunity to describe how the training was a blessing.

Section II

Impact on Community and City

"I guess testimony to the depth and the wealth of what we received is the fact that we've started our own organization to pass it on...And, in addition to that, graduates are now in leadership with us and graduates of what would be 2nd and 3rd generation...are now meeting alongside us to impact even more and to impact kids as leaders also."

~Grand Rapids

Chapter 8

Vision and Mission for Creating Community Change

One of the goals of the Initiative was to inspire participants to create change within their communities. Change first begins with a sense of vision and mission for the community – what does the leader want the community to look like and how can he or she help members of the community make that goal a reality. To gain a sense of the degree to which graduates had developed a wide-reaching vision and mission, the Alumni Survey asked participants about their mission and vision for themselves, their organization or ministry, their local community, and their city or metro area. Table 8.1 shows percentage responses for all graduates who answered these questions. Across all categories, virtually no one Strongly Disagreed or Disagreed that the Initiative had helped them develop a clear mission and vision, showing that DVULI trainers were highly successful in transmitting a profound sense of vision and mission within the participants. However, as can be seen by the percentages in red, agreement diminished somewhat as the scope of the ministry increased. This appears to indicate that graduates were more comfortable thinking about and planning for a vision and mission involving themselves and their immediate environment, but became less certain as the size and scope of the ministry increased. Nevertheless, given the high levels of agreement, it is clear that the Initiative helped graduates to think and plan for community change in a big way.

Further comparisons of these questions by gender, age, years in ministry, year of graduation and other variables are presented in the chapter titled “Looking to the Future”.

TABLE 8.1

DVULI training helped me develop a clear vision and mission for...					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
...my personal mission	1.1	1.5	6.6	35.4	55.4
...my organization/ministry	0.4	1.9	10.8	41.6	45.4
...my local community	0.0	2.2	17.2	50.2	30.3
...my city or metro area	0.8	2.3	27.3	42.8	26.9

Graduates were also asked several questions relating to the extent to which DVULI training had strengthened their ministries in a variety of ways. Table 8.2 shows that, once again, graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed at very high rates. Such high levels of agreement

are important because any attempts to implement a new mission and vision without the support and backing of the graduates' faith community are likely to meet with strong resistance and possible failure. Similarly, graduates' corresponding levels of commitment to the mission of their organization is also likely to play a major role in the success of implementing the desired mission and vision. Finally, a broadened and more holistic understanding of graduates' vision of evangelism is important because they are more likely to see that evangelism is more than growing their church membership – it is restoring their entire community to God's ideal of health, safety, and happiness. As such, activities such as cleaning up neighborhood playgrounds, hosting church-based Christmas parties, creating puppet shows on topics of safety, and collaborating with other churches in the community to conduct job fairs or youth talent contests all contribute to the improvement of the neighborhood and allow graduates to link their broadened missions to the missions of other ministries and non-profit activities within the community. Along the way, goals of more traditional evangelism can be integrated in natural, non-threatening ways. Such synergistic approaches create more opportunities for change than could ever be realized by just one individual working alone in a small church ministry.

TABLE 8.2

DVULI training strengthened my...					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
...relationship to a local faith community	0.4	4.8	15.9	40.6	38.4
...commitment to the faith-based mission of my organization	1.5	2.6	17.4	35.8	42.6
...broad-based and holistic vision of evangelism	.7	2.2	13.8	35.3	48.0

Focus groups were also conducted across the nation to gather additional information about the experiences of DVULI graduates following the Initiative. In order to gain more insight into the degree to which graduates had developed a broader mission and vision for their communities and ministries, the following questions were asked: *"Do you have a vision and mission for creating change in your community?"* and *"How was it influenced by DVULI training?"* The responses to this question provided additional information about DVULI's impact on the graduates' approach to individual, community, and ministry outlook. Although there were a total of 49 individual comments from graduates at various focus group locations, these comments were coded and analyzed for common themes, with several containing multiple ideas. This process generated 100 unique responses. The major themes that resulted from the focus group responses, in descending order include: 1) specific areas of mission and vision, 2)

individual mission and vision development, 3) group mission and vision development, and 4) missions accomplished.

Specific Areas of Mission and Vision

As focus group participants discussed the impact of the DVULI Initiative on the clarification of mission focus and overall vision, they identified specific areas of focus that were impacted after the trainings. The comments in this major theme represent 59% of the total responses. Through a closer analysis of this major theme, several minor themes emerged including DVULI's influence on graduates' visions for their: 1) ministries, 2) communities, 3) cities, and 4) the world.

Visions for Ministries

As the focus group participants discussed mission and vision clarification, it was evident that DVULI helped graduates clarify their focus in ministry. Graduates began to increase their awareness of the potential impact of their ministry on others and this resulted in the generation of plans for the future on an individual ministry level.

"...the possibility that we have to really lead the way and be an example to the rest of the denomination and how they can reach out into the community and how they can have effective partnerships in the church and how the church is not just a Sunday entity and how this church meets real human needs, I think is a real infinite possibility. I mean just a huge possibility, because if we lead the way I see these very excited, energetic churches following suit..." ~Denver

"My frustration was what good does it do to take this kid, bring him to club, give him a Bible study, take him to camp, all of that kind of stuff. And when I go to the parent's house the [crack] pipe is laying on the table. What influence do I have - I'm limited. I don't live with that kid, I don't put all of the time that it takes to erase all of that negative influence in their life, so yeah, at that point it can't be just reaching the kid - it has to be able to go beyond that and figure out how to meet all the needs of the entire family. That's another huge step to try and to figure out that part too." ~Denver

"...it actually helped us to narrow our mission because we thought we were going to be working with kids all over the Westside and really becoming a change agent all across the Westside city. For us, what we did is we narrowed our geographic focus heavily as a result of learning a lot of Bob Lupton's things that he had to teach." ~Chicago

"...consequently, how they [church members] see their neighborhood and their role in it has shifted from being 'We are going to be a hospitality center to the east side, to we're actually going to be around people discovering who they are and how they can take more charge over their own lives and how they can become more empowered...." ~Grand Rapids

Visions for Communities

An additional minor theme that emerged as graduates discussed their vision and mission for creating change was related to community focus. Some graduates began to move from an individual ministry focus to wondering how they could impact the community outside their individual ministry. Some graduates actually began work on their vision to see community change and others were able to identify their personal mission to the community.

"...when I first started the DeVos process, we were living in one place and then we moved. And I found out they had a block club and I got excited...; that was right after we did the session with Bob Lupton. I was like 'OK, let me jump in and get involved'. And I got to know those people by name, what's going on, attending the events and so forth. And I had a particular vision in my mind of what it could look like..." ~Chicago

"I'm going to start to work for _____ County Juvenile services and as I look at that, I see all these kids that are coming through the center right now. I know there are resources outside the juvenile center that can be better tapped into and so I've begun to look at it now. I'm starting to look at what would it take to implement the plan to find out who's in the county and pull those folks together and say, 'Look at the potential for each kid in here....'" ~Denver

"We didn't necessarily have a thought about 'community' before the DeVos thing. It was simply about my little ministry, my little corner of _____ and _____ [street names omitted] and what I'm doing with these kids. And I didn't know what else was out there and I didn't think it was important.... But coming together with this group of people, the people in my city group, showed me how the city of Grand Rapids is so much bigger than my little corner. And I never had that perspective before." ~Grand Rapids

"Without a doubt, I have a greater burden to reach our community where our church is..." ~Houston

Visions for Cities

In addition to the evolution of vision and mission clarification to communities, some graduates developed a vision and made it their mission to change their city. This was often

attributed to the ability to think on a systems level and to incorporate the skill of community capacity building. Graduates began to dream and plan and, in some cases, place themselves in the position to make changes on the city level.

"Looking at New Mexico, we're the 4th poorest state in nation, we have the 3rd worse credit average of any state in the country, we are dubbed 'the welfare state'.... I was excited about knowing that I could begin to develop something that would help meet us as a state where we were at and they hired me as a state director to do that. I got to do that for several years, and it was really neat to see. I mean, Albuquerque Rescue Mission, a very urban ministry in town working with us, a big church in town working with us. The community need was greater than any ethnic group, it was greater than any economic group, it was kind of a cross-denominational need. I think I wouldn't have been open to that had not been in DeVos." ~Albuquerque

"[She] said this last fall or last spring and its stuck with me ever since - 'Our vision is really to see Grand Rapids be a leader-full city.' And that is totally a vision that has come from the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative." ~Grand Rapids

Visions for the World

The final minor theme that emerged as graduates discussed their mission and vision was that of a global vision. DVULI was able to instill in some of the graduates the idea that change can take place outside of individual, community, and city ministries. Global visioning was discussed in the form of systems thinking, as was city vision in the previous minor theme. While some individuals moved to a global focus, there were also graduates who were impressed to step out of a global role and narrow their focus.

"In my mind, I do think world wide...the systems thinking helps me see that. ...I help a child or a family and see how they impact the community, and how that community impacts the city at large - the city, the state - the state, the country and so on and so forth. I understand it that way." ~Grand Rapids

"In my mind I see a world change in mission. I see a world truly changed for Christ... being able to say, 'OK, what I'm doing is going to impact the world, not just myself'; not just the people that I'm quickly connected with, but the world...once again going back to that personal mission statement of 'OK, am I doing what needs to be done according to the vision and the mission that the Lord has given me?' and being able to see the world changed through that systems thinking." ~Grand Rapids

"When you really look at the picture of 'are we doing something in the community'...just that principle has impacted other pastors so much to where now we're cutting back on spending thousands of dollars on radio programs and

TV programs, that he himself [the head pastor] was doing, you know? Reaching the world, but he's like 'OK, I'm preaching to 50 million people all over the world so what about here in the community?' He said, 'I'm going to stop doing this and I'm going to put more emphasis here'." ~Houston

Individual Mission and Vision Development

The next major theme that emerged as a result of the analysis of focus group comments was related to graduates' experiences of personal mission and vision development during and after the DVULI Initiative. This theme represents 23% of the total responses. It appeared that graduates were not only able to clarify their individual ministry mission projects but were also able to develop a spiritual vision of ministry that acted as a guiding force for mission clarification.

"It helped me clarify just my personal mission outside of the ministry that I was engaged in, just as an individual." ~Chicago

"...I guess my theology is, before Jesus spoke He helped people. Jesus told people about the right thing to do but also healed people, so that the whole dichotomy of body and spirit doesn't work." ~Philadelphia

"I'm letting some other responsibilities that I've had at church go because I feel that strongly about it - that someone has to make that a part of coming outside the walls of the church and having an ear to the ground. As a result of that decision God blessed me just a couple weeks to hook up with this guy with the same heart to do that, and so together we're going to form our own - it won't be like a civic club, I'll just call it a facilitation group. You know, some leadership to really address some of the issues in the area." ~Houston

"I've been a part of a lot of groups, church things, just a lot of different things with families and I see myself now, like right now in my life, really being relational and purposeful." ~Grand Rapids

Group Mission and Vision Development

In addition to individual development, focus group participants also discussed the impact of the DeVos experience on group mission and vision identification and growth. It appeared that graduates were not only impacted on an individual level but that their entire ministry teams and organizations were able to clarify and benefit from a more developed vision and focus. As a result, projects were envisioned or established as ministry focus was broadened.

"We thought about doing something with Reload...we had thought that we would offer ourselves for different conferences and so forth, like Reload and

those different kinds of things and I don't know that that's really materialized. I know that's something we desired and believe we have something worth sharing.” ~Chicago

“And being able to slowly, even at a ‘Christian organization’, but more of the social service type, still being able to see that impact. And then slowly impacting Child Protective Services through our relationships with them ... because little by little, even Lansing, the state legislation is being impacted. It is just amazing to be able to see the big picture where the passion is going to go.” ~Grand Rapids

“I know what the vision is, now the people know what the vision is and now they're saying, ‘OK, get us there’ and so the training now is starting to unfold.”

~Houston

Missions Accomplished

The last major theme that emerged contained graduates’ comments related to missions and visions that developed as a result of the Initiative and were actually accomplished. These graduates were able to take the knowledge they gained and convert it into change at the community level. The missions they developed were actually accomplished and represent 9% of the total comments that were generated by focus group participants.

“He and I did some things together in terms of tennis and we organized a block party and we brought some people in and we had a high school from the suburbs come in and brought their tennis team in to teach these inner city kids how to play tennis. [He] got involved and they brought sandwiches and raised money for tennis racquets and tennis balls for all these kids.... One of the little girls who went through just the block party, she's hitting tennis balls on the side of the building. She was up at 9 o'clock at night, something like that. The next morning she's up at 7 [o'clock] hitting tennis balls on the side of this building. And she went to the guy who was head of the house, [she said], ‘You are going to put a playground up in here and we need a tennis court’ and the guy said, ‘Hey, let's do it’.” ~Denver

“Yeah, we went to Florida but we didn't sleep in a hotel, we slept on a floor of a church and we served other people. The responses I got from parents and all those activities that it led to after that trip - we were going out and doing for others. Every last one of those kids were there. They got it.” ~Indianapolis

“The community looks at our church as a place for answers. We are constantly developing things. For example, we've been, for the last five years, delivering thanksgiving baskets.” ~Philadelphia

Summary

To gain a sense of the degree to which graduates had developed a wide-reaching vision and mission, the Alumni Survey asked participants about their mission and vision for themselves, their organization or ministry, their local community, and their city or metro area. Across all categories, virtually no one Strongly Disagreed or Disagreed that the Initiative had helped them develop a clear mission and vision, showing that DVULI trainers were highly successful in transmitting a profound sense of vision and mission within the participants. However, agreement diminished somewhat as the scope of the ministry increased. This appears to indicate that graduates were more comfortable thinking about and planning for a vision and mission involving themselves and their immediate environment, but became less certain as the size and scope of the ministry increased.

Graduates were also asked several questions relating to the extent to which DVULI training had strengthened their ministries in a variety of ways. Once again, graduates either Agreed or Strongly Agreed at very high rates. Such high levels of agreement are important because any attempts to implement a new mission and vision without the support and backing of the graduates' faith community are likely to meet with strong resistance and possible failure. Similarly, graduates' corresponding levels of commitment to the mission of their organization is also likely to play a major role in the success of implementing the desired mission and vision. Finally, a broadened and more holistic understanding of graduates' vision of evangelism is important because they are more likely to see that evangelism is more than growing their church membership – it is restoring their entire community to God's ideal of health, safety, and happiness. Collaborating with other churches in the community all contribute to the improvement of the neighborhood and allow graduates to link their broadened missions to the missions of other ministries and non-profit activities within the community. Along the way, goals of more traditional evangelism can be integrated in natural, non-threatening ways. Such synergistic approaches create more opportunities for change than could ever be realized by just one individual working alone in a small church ministry.

Focus groups were also conducted to gather additional information about the experiences of DVULI graduates following the Initiative. In order to gain more insight into the degree to which graduates had developed a broader mission and vision for their communities and ministries, the following questions were asked: "*Do you have a vision and mission for creating change in your community?*" and "*How was it influenced by DVULI training?*" Major themes included specific areas of mission and vision, individual mission and vision development, group mission and vision development, and missions accomplished.

In the theme '*Specific Areas of Mission and Vision*', participants discussed the Initiative's influence on their ministries, communities, cities, and the world. On the ministry level, graduates began to increase their awareness of the potential impact of their ministry on others and this resulted in the generation of plans for the future on an individual ministry level. On the community level, graduates began to move from an individual ministry focus to wondering how they could impact the community outside their individual ministry. On the city level, some graduates developed a vision and made it their mission to change their city. This was often

attributed to the ability to think on a systems level and to incorporate the skill of community capacity building. Finally, on a global level, DVULI was able to instill in some of the graduates the idea that change can take place outside of individual, community, and city ministries.

In the theme '*Individual Mission and Vision Development*', graduates were able to develop a spiritual vision of ministry that acted as a guiding force for mission clarification, while in the theme '*Group Mission and Vision Development*', graduates' entire ministry teams and organizations were able to clarify and benefit from a more developed vision and focus. As a result, projects were envisioned or established as ministry focus was broadened. Finally, in the theme '*Missions Accomplished*', graduates were able to take the knowledge they gained and convert it into change at the community level. The missions they developed were actually accomplished.

In conclusion, DVULI trainers were highly successful in transmitting a profound sense of vision and mission within the participants. This strengthened their ability to think beyond their own church borders and consider ways to expand and implement their mission within their community, city, and world.

Chapter 9

Involvement in the Community

Accomplishing Mission and Vision

While graduates may have developed a clear vision and mission, that planning is worth little if it doesn't translate into action. To gain a better understanding of the implementation of their mission and vision, graduates were asked the extent to which their mission and vision were being accomplished for themselves, their organization or ministry, their local community, and their city and metro area. Table 9.1 shows percentage responses for all graduates who answered these questions. Across all categories, a large majority of graduates Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Initiative was helping them to accomplish their mission and vision, showing that DVULI trainers were highly successful in moving participants from vision to action. However, as can be seen by the percentages in red, agreement diminished somewhat as the scope of the ministry increased. This appears to indicate that graduates were more comfortable implementing a vision and mission involving themselves and their immediate environment, but became less involved as the size and scope of the ministry increased. Nevertheless, given the high levels of agreement, it is clear that the Initiative helped graduates become involved in community change in a big way.

Further comparisons of these questions by gender, age, years in ministry, year of graduation and other variables are presented in the chapter titled "Looking to the Future".

TABLE 9.1

My mission and vision are being accomplished for...					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
...my personal mission	1.1	1.5	6.3	45.2	45.9
...my organization/ministry	0.4	1.5	13.2	44.2	40.8
...my local community	0.8	4.2	27.6	45.6	21.8
...my city or metro area	1.2	5.9	35.9	37.1	19.9

Increasing Community Involvement

The Alumni Survey next asked graduates whether the Initiative had led them to greater involvement in a more specific variety of community development activities. Table 9.2 shows that graduates became much more involved in their communities across a variety of settings. Highest levels of involvement appear to be found in the expansion of broad ministry networks, greater involvement in community development activities, and increased activities across denominational lines. Volunteer work and involvement in political and civic affairs have also increased, although not to the same degree as the other areas.

Increased involvement in these areas is exciting to see because it shows that graduates have internalized the values of interdependence and leverage and are practicing the Breakthrough Skills of systems thinking, collaboration, and resource networking. The initial challenge of grasping these somewhat abstract concepts and the even harder task of actually forming relationships and developing partnerships is noteworthy and important since graduates appear to be living out these principles in their everyday ministries. Graduates are demonstrating that they are breaking down the traditional boundaries of denominationalism and broadening their scope of ministry to include the community in a more holistic and inclusive manner. Involvement in volunteer work and political and civic affairs may be somewhat lower based on the more narrowly defined scope of graduates' ministries. Such involvement may also be lower because some graduates have less time to devote to such activities. For example, earlier data on weekly number of hours spent in ministry show that many graduates are involved in ministry on a part-time basis, possibly leaving less time for political and civic engagement. That said, rates of involvement in all areas show marked improvements and give DVULI staff good reason to be pleased with these changes.

TABLE 9.2

DVULI training has led me to greater involvement in...					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
...broad ministry networks	0.4	3.7	19.9	37.5	38.6
...community development activities	0.4	3.7	17.9	48.5	29.5
...cross-denominational activities	0.4	4.5	23.2	36.0	36.0
...volunteer work in my community	0.4	6.8	30.5	40.6	21.8
...political and civic affairs	1.1	14.1	38.9	29.4	16.4

Focus Group Results

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the activities that have resulted as graduates turned their visions into actions, focus group participants were asked the following questions: *“Has your involvement in community activities, civic affairs, or volunteer work changed as a result of your DVULI training? Describe.”* *“Have you developed new projects, programs, or organizations as a result of your DVULI training?”* The responses to these questions provide additional information about DVULI’s impact on graduates’ involvement in their organizations or ministries, communities, and cities or metro areas.

There were a total of 24 individual comments generated by graduates at the various focus group locations regarding change in community activities after participating in the DVULI trainings. These comments were coded and analyzed for common themes, with several containing multiple ideas. This process generated 34 individual quotes. The major themes that resulted from the focus group responses, in descending order include: 1) inspiration to become involved in the community, 2) changes in thinking about ministry and community, 3) increased involvement in civic affairs, 4) increased neighborhood outreach, 5) using networking skills in outreach ministries, and 6) increased involvement of others in projects.

The focus group participants were also given the opportunity to describe any new programs, projects, and organizations that they had developed or been involved in developing as a result of participating in the DVULI Initiative. The 44 descriptions of the programs, projects, or organizations that were provided by graduates add additional meaning to the community and organizational changes that occurred because of graduates’ experiences with DVULI. Some, but not all of these descriptions are included in the following sections.

Inspiration to Become Involved

Of the total focus group responses related to changes in community involvement, 26.5% described graduates’ sense of personal inspiration to become more involved in their local communities. In this major theme, graduates described a new or renewed passion for their neighbors that was created because the concepts and skills learned during DVULI training. This passion resulted in various personal projects and community initiatives. Graduates shifted their focus from ministry exclusively within their churches and began to notice the needs of their neighbors. They began spending more time working on their own block, with the children of their own neighborhoods, and looking for things to become involved in on a regular basis.

“Even though I was working with kids all the time, I hadn't dealt with the kids in my own neighborhood. I hadn't dealt with those kids in my neighborhood for all kinds of reasons I can't even put into words - I really don't know. But in the whole piece with John Perkins being in the community, I live in one of the more aggressive communities in the city and interact with the kids, having them over

to the house. I mean it has totally changed the dynamic on our block and our house.” ~Indianapolis

*“I went back home and looked at my neighborhood and saw all the debris and that Saturday afternoon I literally put on some gloves and got some trash bags and cleaned from my house all the way around the block, into the alley and came back on the other side. And I literally had two big garbage bags of debris.”
~ Chicago*

*“I’ve got children living in my house right now. We’ve got two of them - their house caught on fire and being a part of their life [is important]. I go to football games, I...bring them to cross country meets, helping them to work [on homework] and really feeling called. I guess in my life now, I look for [daily] things. It’s kind of weird - I wake up and pray to God on what he ask[s] me to do.”
~ Grand Rapids*

As one graduate who participated in a focus group described his/her experience, the DUVLI Initiative became an empowering agent for motivated youth leaders. With an increase in knowledge, skills, and support, graduates began developing personal visions that were actually achieved.

“I think for me it gave me the ability and confidence and tools to design a whole program that basically targeted at-risk, adjudicated youth, but was down the same line of youth that I worked with. But I was able to actually design something on paper, make it happen, use some of my networking and resource abilities to get some grant writers and things of that nature to help us go to the next level to make this program happen.” ~Denver

Changes in Thinking about Community

Focus group participants also described changes in the ways they thought about the community and ministry. These changes were attributed to various DVULI skills and concepts such as those taught by Bob Lupton, the awareness of community needs, and the leverage a ministry can have within a community. This major theme represented 20.6% of the total focus group comments.

“I think in response to community— the Bob Lupton piece probably revolutionized my thinking in a lot of ways, just as far as the guy who lives next to me and lives across the street...because when I first started the DeVos process we were living in one place and then we moved. And I found out they had a block club and I got excited. I was like, ‘OK...let me jump in and get involved’.” ~Chicago

"We have one program - our Back to School program - where kids get back packs and school supplies, all new and everything. [In] all the things we do now we changed our focus...Christmas toys being delivered to these family's homes, and that is something DeVos has helped me to think...rather than making it a City Teams-forced event, it's about getting toys to the parents so they can get it ready for their own kids and have their family experience and not have it here."
~Philadelphia

Individual testimonials from graduates that described what occurred after the Initiative also indicate that the way they thought about ministry and community outreach was directly impacted by the Initiative. Ministries were not only born, but existing ministries were re-formulated with the DULUI skills and concepts at their core.

"I think the greatest testament or testimony of this whole thing is that we in the city of Grand Rapids have taken the whole thing and made a few adaptations and made it our own. We have our own organization, the Grand Rapids Initiative for Leaders which is almost exactly what the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative is and what better testimony to the Initiative and the wealth of what we received than the fact that we've started our own organization to pass it on."
~Grand Rapids

"We just had our annual Christmas party and, before DeVos, I would do all the fund raising the shopping and the planning all in a two-week period for about 150 kids and about 10 moms and so through DeVos and a loving and supporting spouse assisting me, bringing me home, we would start developing those interdependent relationships and everything...Next year Wal-Mart is going to do a matching grant. We have two major sponsors right now and so she is putting together a team of people and all of this that we would do in two weeks is now going to take about eight months but we are going to get almost triple the number of people that we had." ~Indianapolis

Increased Involvement in Civic Affairs

Not only did graduates increase their involvement in personal community outreach and experience a change in thinking and ministry approach, some also increased their involvement in civic affairs. Of the total focus group responses, 17.6% discussed the need for social involvement on a civic level and described actual events that occurred after participating in the DVULI Initiative. For example, in Philadelphia, graduates discussed a specific example of civic activity involving a police officer and one of the Hispanic women in his neighborhood, making this a major theme. Ironically, Philadelphia also had slightly lower turnout for the focus group because several members had been involved with a visit for a U.S. Senator in their church and neighborhood.

*"I find that DeVos has caused me to realize that we must be socially active."
~Philadelphia*

"I think one thing in our community, we've become more socially active for social justice." ~Philadelphia

"He's [the police officer] screaming and screaming and screaming at her [a Hispanic mother with poor English skills], and she's trying to communicate that her child is outside alone and he said he didn't want to hear it and he was just very abusive to this woman and I stood right next to her...I went to other officers and I said, 'What is the name of the giant officer...what is his badge number'...I wrote it down, I got in my car, I went home, I got on my computer and I wrote...our city police commissioner a letter and I mailed it and then about three weeks later I get [a] call from [a] detective... we made an appointment. I went in there." ~Philadelphia

Individual stories given by graduates who participated in the focus groups indicate that cities besides Philadelphia also got involved in civic outreach.

I shared that I was in the DeVos leadership. And when prominent people ... big CEO's meet in a little alley and I'd just point out what we have been doing, and I would say, 'You know, I'm in DeVos' and that is kind of recognized in a way...and they say 'Oh, that's DeVos' and they know. But I'll tell you one of the big impacts that DeVos had in my community was to network with the Indianapolis and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce there...partnered with the chaplaincy program and the youth center to do Christmas and I think that is when we got that little grant from DeVos and we partnered and I have never done ... that ministry in 20 years." ~Indianapolis

"[DVULI] has really helped me to be more thoughtful and targeted and because I've launched a multi-cultural movement of women last October to do a - we call it a Women United For Good - to do good works in the community, building relationships in the city with the Mayor's office to help us to target what are some of the key needs in the city. And talking to city councilmen, 'What can we take on as projects, from what you're seeing as being needs that need to be dealt with?' And I'm getting some great information from them and I just think it's going to be more intentional and effective and really achieve the goals that we set out to achieve." ~Houston

Increased Neighborhood Outreach

In addition to becoming more involved in civic affairs, graduates also described an increase in community outreach projects on behalf of their representative organizations. In all, these

comments represent 14.7% of the total focus group responses related to change in community involvement. Based on these responses, graduates not only applied the skills and concepts learned from the DVULI Initiative to their own personal vision for ministry but have transported these skills and concepts to their churches and organizations. Graduates describe an increase in church and organizational outreach planning based on visions and skills developed through DVULI trainings.

"We've been looking at some things in our community. Now our community is changing and our youth ministry team has been suggesting doing things in the apartment complexes once a month...we have people researching...all kinds of information that we're combining so that we know what we can present in those areas to see what it is they want from us as a church in that area." ~Houston

"We will go do community outreach, have our radical style we go out with, blasting music, cars and dramas, and that. We still need to teach people to not only come to church on Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, whenever we have a service, but build your life around Christ in all areas and actually be a productive person." ~Albuquerque

"... Halloween's coming up and we're going to stand on the corner in front of the church and going to pass out bags of candy and tell them that God loves you, Jesus loves you, and so forth, have some candy while you're at it, taking a clue from _____ with the school advice piece, we basically adopted a school and we have a presence there." ~Philadelphia

Some of the graduates described powerful changes that resulted in specific ministry programs when they took the DVULI skills, values, and concepts back to their churches and organizations. New programs were developed and existing programs were revitalized by implementing skills and incorporating those skills and values into ministry programs.

"We've started some things also at church. We have a team that is working on some grant money to do some things in the area of tutoring, for every[body] and anybody, just all kinds of things in the community that [are] needed. There are lots of things we want to do. We want to try and start in an area that we can control and then branch out. And everybody has ideas that they want to do and the church has this underlying motto – 'Church in the community, with the heart of the community'. And I always keep bringing that up to the forefront." ~Houston

"We have a puppet and drama team but we incorporate these [Breakthrough] skills into it and the older ones get to mentor the younger ones. That's part of them not paying for the program, that's part of their way of paying back. They take what they learned and train younger [ones] so when [they] go to college, the younger kids, they step up and keep rotating over and over and they mastered it

and [I] sort of worked my way out of there and wanted to do bigger, I wanted to take same program to do it bigger and kids get kids from 18-25 and have them for nine months and take the core values and really train them with it."

~Philadelphia

"Now we have Urban Empowerment Initiative...right now ours is at a job skill center, so we are teaching computer skills, how to write a resume, do some basic spreadsheets, Excel and networking. [Its] community related, adult and youth, we are developing a youth mentoring program, so we'll have after school mentoring, tutoring available, we have some adult education classes for substance abuse, anger management, we have youth anger management, gathering certification for all of those classes, GED preparation, we have rehab homes for men and women who have drug and alcohol problems, they go through the programs and through our church, but a lot of them don't have job related skills, so we teach the computer skills, many don't have their GED so providing a place for them to be trained." ~Albuquerque

Utilizing Networking Skills in Outreach Ministries

Graduates who participated in focus groups also described an increase in networking at an individual level and at the organizational level. The comments described in this section relate to projects that were yet to be accomplished and some projects that were accomplished as a result of several individuals or organizations working together. This major theme represented 11.8% of the total responses in this section.

"Thank God for my pastor. I'm really excited about that. I'm expecting big things, you know, from focusing more on the community." ~Houston

"But, it was a city block, but what we did, I had passion, I wanted to put one of these in all of the worst neighborhoods of the city and so we ended up with almost 40 churches involved in this city and we did 4 of them at the same time on the same day." ~Philadelphia

"Our church has adopted a school." ~Philadelphia

Some graduates who participated in the focus groups took the opportunity to describe the impact that learning and taking advantage of networking skills has had on their ministry or organization. These testimonials show that communities are being impacted by the skills that individual graduates have learned through the Initiative.

"Now we've formed an alliance of pastors in our community - all different denominations - and we have decided that Thanksgiving this year has to be a combined effort. We are doing between 140 to 160 homes now, and one church

is buying all the turkeys, another church is getting all the fresh vegetables and another church is getting the canned goods. And instead of one church doing a small amount, we are doing a big amount. Another thing that I'm finding exciting in the community is the partnering now with a church in the suburbs that has identified 5 churches...and they are actually going to start providing us food, furniture and clothing for our churches to become distribution centers for our neighborhood and that's come out of all of this partnering.” ~Philadelphia

*“There's over 260 low to moderate income families that have developed saving habits, have improved their credit scores, have enhanced their financial knowledge, bought their first home, gone to college or trade school or started a small business. That's through a collaboration of 11 organizations around four West Michigan counties. There were two work force development networks that were built to help low income people find work. We brought 15 organizations into it, and at the beginning it helped to see how it was going to work. Eventually 50 some [organizations] around West Michigan joined that network.”
~Grand Rapids*

Increased Involvement of Others

The last theme that emerged in this section from the focus group responses was related to an increase in graduates' involvement of others in ministry projects. This major theme contains 8.8% of the total responses related to changes in community activities. Some of this involvement was also illustrated in the previous section. This increased involvement was also attributed to the Initiative by graduates as they were purposeful in getting youth, ministry partners, and leadership involved in community change. It appears that this pursuit to involve others is related to the mentoring aspect of the Initiative.

“[I] go out and help speak more to the people and the younger people that live around the neighborhood. We've asked them ... to go out and do ministry work and the younger ones are getting more involved with church and we're helping them out with school and stuff like that so they're not hating us as much because we're helping them out.” ~Houston

“I sort of worked myself out of a job, because [I] took these skills and placed it into the kids and these kids do a great job. I mean they run with the ministry. I've got people coming up to me saying they don't need me no more.” ~Philadelphia

Individual testimonials reveal that graduates who engaged in mentoring others were very active in their communities and integrated the DVULI skills into their mentoring approaches. In addition, there was a common desire to pass the DVULI values and skills on to the individuals being mentored.

"We use that [a specific DVULI training exercise] all the time with volunteer groups who come, trying to teach them about community or the young people in our groups in the development program. We use it a lot, as well as the maze."
~Chicago

"We've been involved with so much, and many things that went on here with youth--Dare to Share, Pure by Choice...we take kids to [attend], collaborative stuff...we get scholarships and take a bunch of kids down and have fun and do those kinds of ministries." ~Denver

"I have 36 people who I have influence over their roles here at Breakthrough. And I've got, in my logic model for this year, I've got two goals. One is bringing financial credibility to the program staff so that we have balance in the organization. The second one is developing a cohesive ministry philosophy that's based off of this DeVos content and the way it's worked itself out in me."
~Chicago

Developing New Community Relationships

The ultimate test of a program is whether it actually makes a measurable impact on the community. While it is difficult to measure ultimate impacts such as reductions in crime or poverty, a variety of shorter-term impacts can be measured, including the development of new organizations or partnership in the community. To measure this impact, graduates were asked how many projects, programs, or organizations they had developed in a typical six-month period. While 72.9% of the graduates had developed 1 to 5 projects, programs or organizations, 10% of them had not developed any – with an average of 3.7 programs per graduate.

The DVULI Alumni survey also wanted to know how many organizations the graduates had partnered with to provide ministry or services. While 5.1% of the graduates had not partnered with any organizations, 55.5% had worked with between one to five organizations to provide ministry or service. However, graduates actually partnered with an average of 8.8 organizations, reflecting the higher number of partnerships created by a smaller number of graduates.

Such findings highlight the development of bridging capital mentioned in the literature review at the beginning of this report. *Bridging* capital refers to the overlapping interests of people who may have no obvious common bonds, such as members of a community, but who might come together to clean up a neighborhood, protest lack of police presence, or rebuild a playground. Such relationships help communities develop stronger social capital by connecting community members around common causes or activities. As new organizations and partnerships are formed, communities mobilize around social and community events. This often leads to discussion of community problems and concerns and leaders such as those

trained in DeVos principles can help to move these concerns to concrete action. The focus group findings found in the sections above and below offer many examples of the rich new relationships that have developed in communities across the nation as a result of DVULI training.

Focus Group Findings

The DVULI Initiative sought to equip graduates with networking skills that would increase not only their sense of mutual support but that would also create a synergistic impact on the community. Through cross-collaboration with churches of differing faiths and community organizations, a community network that intersected across denominational barriers as well as barriers related to race, ethnicity, and gender could be established. The development of a community-wide network using skills and concepts learned from the Initiative could equip graduates to have an impact on not just their own church or agency but on the community or city as a whole. To better understand the effects of DVULI training on graduates' networking activities and gain insight into the actual results within their communities, focus group participants were asked the following questions: *"Apart from your DVULI colleagues, what new or improved community relationships have developed as a result of your DVULI training?" "Are you building connections with people outside the ministry sector? Describe."* This discussion generated a total of 128 comments. These comments revealed that: 1) many of the focus group participants developed relationships that benefited their own ministries; 2) others built relationships with city officials and other non-ministry related organizations; 3) some networking activities were successful at linking multiple denominations; and 4) others show that graduates moved beyond the barriers of race, ethnicity, and gender. Of the total focus group responses, 10.9% are represented by the following general comments regarding new community relationships that developed because of participation in the Initiative.

"...Whenever I thought ministry, it was always at the local church. That's where it took place, but then, just thinking, 'OK, it's my neighbors, it's people' ... the reason why communities are in such lack, some of the most qualified Christians who live on those blocks and within those communities are always at church doing some work in ministry, leaving a void right there in the community. So spend more time at home, you know. Just be out and available. And I struggle with that because it seems like that is just a waste of time, I'm just – there. But actually it's very valuable and it's created a different type of network."
~ Chicago

"I find myself trying to forge new partnerships on different levels and I know that that is a direct result of DeVos...forging some relationships on the city-wide level where DeVos helped us to not just aimlessly do something. Just say if you want to make an impact in your city, in your community, don't just randomly do a food pantry - find out if that's what's needed." ~Houston

"We did something in June that [his] church helped us with and again I think it was 11 churches together in this neighborhood and that same park, we succeeded in getting the city to give us the key." ~Philadelphia

Changes in Networking Relationships

The first major theme that emerged as focus group participants discussed the changes that occurred in their current networking relationships or newly developed relationships was related to graduates' individual ministries. DVULI prepared graduates to apply networking skills and concepts to their own ministry programs. The result revitalized some ministries, increased collaboration within the church, and led to new projects. In addition, graduates were able to delegate project responsibilities to other ministry team members or agency members because of newly formed relationships. These quotes represent 22.7% of the total focus group responses related to new community relationships.

"I think it was somewhat modeled in the way we all came from different backgrounds - everything from purity ministry to puppet ministry to discipleship 1 on 1 - and when we would gather as five cities, and talked about what we did, we crossed all kinds of boundaries of function as a ministry and right off the bat I saw it's not about equipping the church person, and it was about equipping the minister...so I really appreciated that and I think it was a taste of the idea of holistic ministry just in the fact that so many of us were a part of it."
~Albuquerque

"I was talking to this pastor's wife, and I said 'you know what, I found this curriculum, let me share what took me so long' and she said 'I've been looking for stuff - you can't find anything' [Sunday School curricula designed specifically for urban youth] and I gave her my copy and I said, 'Look it over, check it out, try it, here's the book and try it out and see how you feel about it and then if you want to keep going with it, then I'll lend you more of the other stuff'. So we are going back and forth [sharing materials across denominations]." ~Philadelphia

"I'd certainly be open if we [a group of ministers from the community] wanted to use this church and do something. If we did it once a quarter, maybe not even that often to start off with and you want success and not failure, but if we did it twice a year and had a workshop and maybe some of us can facilitate the [DVULI] training and can invite any of your kids or youth or whatever, or your workers or volunteers to come and be a part of that, maybe that would be a good starting place. For me, I say 'Hey, this is God's house and it's open to anything we want to use it for'. I know a lot of churches, you know, if they didn't birth the idea they're not a part of it, they don't want it." ~Albuquerque

Impact of Newly Formed Relationships

The second major theme was related to the impact of newly formed relationships outside of the ministry. This theme was represented by 28.9% of the responses. Graduates described community outreach work that reached thousands of individuals. Many were able to secure grant money to invest in their neighborhoods while others were able to bring services that had been absent in urban communities through the collaborative relationships they developed using DVULI skills. These graduates were able to expand their reach outside of their own ministry and into neighborhoods, communities, and cities because of the new or improved relationships that resulted from DVULI.

"We've got a verbal commitment from the Mayor of _____ and he wants to help us out and give us a five-year, yearly increasing grant, starting at \$25,000 to begin to build [the] program...I know it wouldn't have taken place if I hadn't been a part of the Initiative, not just because of that one weekend meeting, but having background from everything else, balance, systems thinking, capacity building, everything else that the Initiative brings forth, helped it develop..."
~Albuquerque

"In the area of collaboration though, you know...it's been a big deal for us. We developed about 12 or 13 significant community collaborations in the last 4 years." ~Chicago

"Right now the most impactful thing we are doing is another organization collaboration called Healthy Marriages, Healthy Relationships. It serves low income parents and expecting parents to help them build relationships with each other and learn communication skills in ways that bless themselves and bless their children. And as of last week Thursday or so in 2 ½ years, about 1050 participants that completed the program through that collaboration."
~Grand Rapids

Inter-Denominational Collaborations

In addition to the relationships that developed within areas of individual ministries and outside in graduates' neighborhoods, communities, and cities, several interdenominational collaborations resulted from the Initiative. In addition, there was a significant shift in thinking as far as collaborating with other denominations. Focus group participants' comments in this section describe the synergy that resulted from multiple congregations coming together for one common purpose. These comments, representing 14.8% of the comments in this section, describe the potential for a broader impact that results when denominational barriers are broken and a common goal is shared.

"I think for me it really challenged me to take collaboration to another level. I've always believed in sharing resources and the Initiative not only affirmed that but challenged me even more in that area and so our ministry, which is basically a ministry that reaches out to at-risk [youth] teaching guitar lessons and bible study, and being Baptist, of the 21 churches we partnered with in the last couple years, only one has been Baptist." ~Albuquerque

"In the ministry I was a part of until a year ago, through the Initiative relationships that were developed in our city group, we started a 3-on-3 basketball tournament... it just kept growing every year and now this year was my first year not doing it and it still continued on and it was bigger than ever had been and it was just this very neighborhood focused event...people come out of their houses, hang out on the street and watch kids shoot hoops for a whole day. And there is a gospel message and food and I mean it is a community event and it's a lot of different churches, different denominations, different races, and it's just everybody coming together to celebrate the community." ~Grand Rapids

"...We have some other larger churches near us - Black, Asian, White - I mean it doesn't matter, so be able to even have services together...with other churches nearby. And this huge church, we were there and had Spanish worship in an all-Black church... nearby. Wow! And so just being able to come together and bypass the culture, the race, the denomination. And that's big because I'm with the Assemblies of God and usually if you're not Assemblies of God then just talk to the hand [puts his hand up to form a stopping motion]." ~Houston

Graduate: "...I was so happy to share information that I know will be a great tool for her.

Interviewer: "And you wouldn't have done that before?"

Graduate: "No, I've always been, 'You work at your church and everyone else works at their churches'. But the initiative has taught me that we are the body and we need to function to the body." ~Philadelphia

Moving Beyond Racial, Ethnic and Gender Barriers

The final major theme that emerged was that of graduates moving beyond racial, ethnic, and gender barriers that exist within ministry and in the community to a level of acceptance and appreciation for diversity. The theme is represented by 29.8% of the total comments for this section. For many of the graduates, the Initiative was the first time they had ever had the opportunity to directly challenge their prejudices, including some they did not know existed. As a result, their approach to ministry and leadership has changed. These graduates are now placing a higher value on diversity and purposefully choosing ministry partners who represent other racial, ethnic, age, and gender groups.

"It was because of these brothers that they helped me to understand the culture and they're people just like I am. And the Lord spoke to me very clearly – 'You work with and develop whomever I send you. I don't care what they look like'. And it just so happened that the person that I probably spend most of my time with, mentoring and developing, is a Hispanic young man and that was eye-opening for me. It was humbling for me, but that probably would have never happened without some of these brothers around the room who shared openly and honestly with me, helped to educate me, that otherwise I really wouldn't have had much experience with." ~Denver

"The year I came into the DeVos program we were having a youth service at our church and that year we had a Hispanic speaker, a Caucasian speaker and an African American speaker all in the same week. And the styles of ministry were very diverse...and it was very good, I mean the youth loved it. It was a total makeover and I believe that a lot of that took place because of this [DVULI training] because I made relationships, developed relationships with people in this group who knew other people." ~Houston

Participation in the DVULI Initiative challenged racial stereotypes that many graduates did not know existed until they found themselves in a room with individuals from backgrounds other than their own. Several focus group participants described this experience as key in expanding their understanding of the importance of having a diverse ministry group for connecting with the community. Others expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in a group that did not recognize race as a significant point of difference between participants and valued the relationships they developed as a result of the Initiative.

"Another piece on this race thing, whether we all want to admit it openly or not, we are all prejudiced in some form or some fashion, and probably deny it. And I'm probably chief at [saying] 'I'm not prejudiced'. When I'm honest, I am [prejudiced]. And I remember when I started in this ministry, I said to myself over and over, I was really looking for someone of the same racial background to develop, but by being in the Initiative, I got a chance to meet some Hispanic brothers that I really didn't have much contact with and that's the fastest growing population in the country, it's a big issue in this state." ~Denver

"That's where it has to start to become a reality - in our churches, our church leadership... think about what the organizations look like. And for me, I'm required to have an advisory board team and so it's helped me strategically place people in that position that look different than me - some are different gender and it's very different from the culture that I'm a part of, but you know I think that's part of becoming a diverse organization or feeling that that's important – is that leadership." ~Denver

"I think the DeVos [training program], they just really embrace it [racial

diversity]. You don't see any color line or people; Christians are Christians."
~Chicago

Graduates who participated in focus groups also took to opportunity to discuss the importance of developing culturally and ethnically diverse relationships. Several had the opportunity to surround themselves with diverse advisors after DVULI training, while others reiterated the idea that the Initiative was the first opportunity many graduates had to collaborate and interact with people from cultures and ethnicities other than their own.

"One of the things that the DeVos program helped me to realize is that diversity has to be from the top down. So, in other words, it's hard to have a diverse community and collaboration if the board is all Anglo or all Black or all Latino."
~Denver

"We have seven advisors and everybody, except two, is of a different race. You know, it was like, if this is going to be a multicultural movement of women, the leadership needs to reflect that. And so again all of that is DeVos fingerprints."
~Houston

"I think for some of the people in our group [this] was probably the first time to be working multi-culturally." ~Philadelphia

In addition to race, culture, and ethnicity, focus group participants also described changes and improvements in gender perceptions and relationships that occurred during or after DVULI training. Both men and women were able to develop an appreciation for each other as they participated in the Initiative and this impacted the friends they chose and some of the individuals they recruited for ministry programs.

"For me personally, coming out of New Jersey and coming here, not having white friends, and then all of a sudden they are white female friends that are allowed to speak truth into my life. And that was just unheard of for me - no... I mean God really took me out of and brought me into a desert and I was glad, years later." ~Grand Rapids

"She's on top of what she does and not that I don't think that women have skills and all of that, it's just that once you see them put it into action and you see how gifted they are like [her], her strengths and all that, and you have a chance to work close to her, you see her do what you can't do, there's a new appreciation that happens...we are recruiting more volunteers, females to work with our kids...and I'm being very intentional about going after them just because of their work ethic and the noncompetitive attitude that they have, at least with me, and so that's some of the change, at least in my world." ~Denver

"The first few times we were together they were scared to death of marriage

because we were all talking about how much we were trying to guard ourselves, but then later on they were actually talking about how we actually gave them some hope that there were men who were concerned about these things and stuff.” ~Chicago

Summary

Accomplishing Mission and Vision

A large majority of graduates Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Initiative was helping them to accomplish their mission and vision, showing that DVULI trainers were highly successful in moving participants from vision to action. However, agreement diminished somewhat as the scope of the ministry increased. This appears to indicate that graduates were more comfortable implementing a vision and mission involving themselves and their immediate environment, but became less involved as the size and scope of the ministry increased.

Increasing Community Involvement

Graduates became much more involved in their communities across a variety of settings. Highest levels of involvement appear to be found in the expansion of broad ministry networks, greater involvement in community development activities, and increased activities across denominational lines. Volunteer work and involvement in political and civic affairs have also increased, although not to the same degree as the other areas. Increased involvement in these areas is exciting to see because it shows that graduates have internalized the values of interdependence and leverage and are practicing the Breakthrough Skills of systems thinking, collaboration, and resource networking. The initial challenge of grasping these somewhat abstract concepts and the even harder task of actually forming relationships and developing partnerships is noteworthy and important since graduates appear to be living out these principles in their everyday ministries.

Focus groups added further detail to the survey results showing increasing community involvement. First, graduates described a new or renewed passion for their neighbors that was created because the concepts and skills learned during DVULI training. This passion resulted in various personal projects and community initiatives. Graduates shifted their focus from ministry exclusively within their churches and began to notice the needs of their neighbors.

Second, focus group participants described changes in the ways they thought about the community and ministry. These changes were attributed to various DVULI skills and concepts such as those taught by Bob Lupton, the awareness of community needs, and the leverage a ministry can have within a community.

Third, graduates discussed the need for social involvement on a civic level and described actual events that occurred after participating in the DVULI Initiative. Graduates were able to

describe interactions with chambers of commerce, mayors' offices, police departments and local social service agencies, among others.

Fourth, in addition to becoming more involved in civic affairs, graduates also described an increase in community outreach projects on behalf of their representative organizations. Again, they were able to describe a rich variety of specific events and activities to illustrate their involvement.

Fifth, graduates also described an increase in networking at both individual and organizational levels. They provided details of projects that were yet to be accomplished and other projects that were accomplished as a result of several individuals or organizations working together.

Finally, graduates increased the involvement of others in their ministry projects. This increased involvement was also attributed to the Initiative by graduates as they were purposeful in getting youth, ministry partners, and leadership involved in community change.

Developing New Community Relationships

The ultimate test of a program is whether it actually makes a measurable impact on the community. While it is difficult to measure ultimate impacts such as reductions in crime or poverty, a variety of shorter-term impacts can be measured, including the development of new organizations or partnership in the community. To measure this impact, graduates were asked how many projects, programs, or organizations they had developed in a typical six-month period. While 72.9% of the graduates had developed 1 to 5 projects, programs or organizations, 10% of them had not developed any – with an average of 3.7 programs per graduate.

The DVULI Alumni survey also wanted to know how many organizations the graduates had partnered with to provide ministry or services. While 5.1% of the graduates had not partnered with any organizations, 55.5% had worked with between one to five organizations to provide ministry or service. However, graduates actually partnered with an average of 8.8 organizations, reflecting the higher number of partnerships created by a smaller number of graduates. Such relationships help communities develop stronger social capital by connecting community members around common causes or activities. As new organizations and partnerships are formed, communities mobilize around social and community events. This often leads to discussion of community problems and concerns and leaders such as those trained in DeVos principles can help to move these concerns to concrete action.

Focus groups also showed many ways in which graduates developed new or improved community relationships. First, DVULI prepared graduates to apply networking skills and concepts to their own ministry programs. The result revitalized some ministries, increased collaboration within the church, and led to new projects. In addition, graduates were able to

delegate project responsibilities to other ministry team members or agency members because of newly formed relationships.

Second, graduates described community outreach work that reached thousands of individuals. Many were able to secure grant money to invest in their neighborhoods while others were able to bring services that had been absent in urban communities through the collaborative relationships they developed using DVULI skills. These graduates were able to expand their reach outside of their own ministry and into neighborhoods, communities, and cities because of the new or improved relationships that resulted from DVULI.

Third, DVULI training caused a significant shift in thinking as far as collaborating with other denominations as well as generating a number of interdenominational collaborations. In addition, graduates described the synergy that resulted from multiple congregations coming together for one common purpose. They were also excited about the potential for a broader impact when denominational barriers are broken and a common goal is shared.

Finally, a large group of focus group participants described how the Initiative helped them move beyond racial, ethnic, and gender barriers. For many of the graduates, the Initiative was the first time they had ever had the opportunity to directly challenge their prejudices, including some they did not know existed. As a result, their approach to ministry and leadership changed and they began focusing on collaborating and interacting with people from cultures and ethnicities other than their own. These graduates are now placing a higher value on diversity and purposefully choosing ministry partners who represent other racial, ethnic, age, and gender groups.

Chapter 10

Community Impact: Changing the World One Community at a Time

Impact on the Community

As noted in Chapter 9, the ultimate test of a program is whether it actually makes a measurable impact on the community. That chapter described partnerships and programs that graduates had developed since completing DVULI training. This chapter explores graduates' involvement in terms of training, mentoring, grant writing, and various other forms of leadership. Table 10.1 summarizes these statistics by showing the average responses for each question. Chapter 11, *Looking to the Future*, examines these same questions, as well as several questions from Chapter 9, in greater detail using a variety of variables to determine which groups were more or less likely to show productive involvement with individuals and programs following their DVULI Training.

TABLE 10.1

DIRECT COMMUNITY IMPACT	
Youth ministered <u>before</u> DVULI	166
Youth ministered <u>after</u> DVULI	304
No. of individuals trained	128
No. of individuals mentored	10.6
Grants you helped bring into your organization	2.8
Dollars raised in grants or donations	~\$50,000

Initiative graduates were first asked how many youth they ministered to in a typical six-month period, both before and after DVULI training. While numbers varied, Table 10.1 shows that graduates ministered to an average of 166 youth *prior* to the Initiative training. In contrast, they ministered to an average of 304 youth *after* DVULI training, an almost 50% increase. Clearly, such an increase shows the power of the Initiative to train and energize youth workers to expand their ministries and serve a greater number of youth within their communities.

The DVULI Alumni Survey then questioned graduates about how many individuals they had

trained in a typical six-month period. A definition of training was not provided for respondents, but comments in the focus groups indicate that most training involved the use of the DVULI curriculum with both youth and adults. While 9.7% of the graduates did not train any individuals, 25% trained between one and ten individuals - with an average of 128 individuals trained per graduate (see Table 10.1). This average was quite high because a substantial number of graduates were involved in training large numbers of people within their communities.

The Alumni Survey also asked graduates how many individuals they had mentored in the area of leadership development. While mentoring was not defined, it was clear that graduates believed this was a focused, time-consuming process that involved forming a meaningful relationship with a mentee. Focus group results indicated that graduates used DVULI values and skills when mentoring others (these results are described in the section below). Only 3.9% of the graduates had not mentored any individuals, and 66.4% had mentored between one to ten people - with an average of 10.6 individuals mentored per DVULI graduate (see Table 10.1). Such findings highlight the commitment of graduates to expand the network of individuals who are involved in leadership within their communities. These influences extend the reach of the DVULI values and skills and make positive community impact more likely as a result. Training and mentoring once again illustrates the bonding and bridging capital that graduates were able to help graduates develop with people within their communities. As these relationships were strengthened through training and mentoring, those who were trained and mentored became more prepared to connect to other individuals and resources, thereby strengthening their churches and communities.

As mentioned previously, it is difficult to measure ultimate impacts within a community, such as reductions in crime or poverty. However, a variety of shorter-term impacts can be measured, including bringing new dollars into the community. To measure this impact, the survey first asked graduates how many grants they had brought into their or others' organizations following DVULI training. Although a substantial number (40.5%) of the graduates had not brought in any grants into their or others' organizations, 47.2% brought in one to five grants, with an average of 2.8 grants per person (see Table 10.1).

To better quantify these findings, the survey finally asked how many dollars the graduates had actually helped raise in grants and or donations as a result of the training. The results were dramatic - the overall amount the graduates helped raise was \$19 million, of which \$10.5 million came from seven large grants. However, even apart from the seven big grants, an average of approximately \$50,000 was raised per person (see Table 10.1). There were also 15 grants that were between \$100,000 and \$600,000, with typical grants between \$10,000 and \$100,000. Grant applications and actual grant dollars and donations highlight the action of linking capital, that form of social capital that can be seen as vertical connection between underprivileged individuals and people in positions of power in official organizations. By bringing in new dollars to their communities, graduates were able to link services and activities to the community in ways that created improvements. Powerful examples of those programs and activities were provided in Chapter 9.

Focus Group Results Relating to Community and City Impact

One of the major focuses of the DVULI Initiative is to equip graduates with the skills and values needed to make an impact within their communities. Breakthrough skills such as personal assessment, collaboration, ministry assessment, resource networking, scenario planning, systems thinking, asset mapping, and community capacity building are some of the tools given to graduates as they progress through the training. DVULI staff strive to instill values such as balance, accountability, empowerment, interdependence, and leverage to help guide graduates as they take these skills and apply them outside of the DVULI experience.

In order to have a clearer picture of impact of these skills and values on graduates' communities, the following focus group questions were asked: *"How has DVULI training impacted your community? Your city?"* These questions generated 38 responses from focus group participants. It should be noted that this question was asked toward the end of each focus group so graduates had less time to respond to these questions than some of the questions in the earlier sections of the groups. After analyzing and coding these responses for common themes, 59 specific comments were generated as several responses contained multiple themes. As focus group participants discussed the importance of the DVULI training, impact on the community and impact on youth emerged as major themes. Minor themes that resulted from the discussion included impact on ministry staff, on personal experiences, and on the city specifically in descending order of occurrence.

As focus group participants discussed the impact of the DVULI training on their communities, three specific areas of emphasis emerged. Graduates' discussions focused on the improvements that resulted in community residents' living situations and experiences, changes in community organizations through the implementation of DVULI concepts, and graduates' experiences with teaching the DVULI skills to community residents themselves. This major theme represents 47.5% of the total comments related to the impact of graduates' training with DVULI. Some general comments include:

"The ability and the tools that I have to transform this program and to successfully make it happen has been life changing for the other people in the community as well." ~ Denver

"...That was a big thing, just trying to make change happen and share kind of what we had been learning and what our passions were and how we saw our community. And so it is excellent to hear that there was some impact hopefully based on that [the GRIL program] and also to the other influences from others in the city." ~ Grand Rapids

Community residents' lives were also impacted by the graduates of the DVULI Initiative. Graduates describe program activities and community events that made both temporary and lasting impacts on the experiences of individuals and families living within their communities.

"My goddaughter - I think a part of leadership through DeVos, standing up, mentoring - now she is in leadership in our church and it is amazing to see how she brought her whole family to Christ. Now her whole family regularly attends church and this has had a profound impact on their family. We are talking mom and six kids and their life is going in a different direction because of that. And it is kind of amazing to watch as you sit back and how God works. And how He uses us and with a direct impact, and she is now going into ministry, which is kind of interesting and she has a story to tell." ~ Grand Rapids

"...They were talking about this homeless issue and I brought this issue back to her and through that conversation the two of them raised an 18-wheeler full of toiletry supplies and we passed them out to like 65 counselors and they thought we were going to bring these little bitty kits but we had these huge trash bags full of stuff ... oh it was incredible! And it was because I sat in these groups and heard what everybody was doing - we were collaborating and listening - and through that process we got so many connections." ~ Indianapolis

"This year we helped about 1800 kids altogether and invited them all to a big party where they could get their new backpack and free games and stuff. And this year, all the kids had to write thank you notes in order to get cotton candy and ... the parents would write the thank you for their kids and the thing I heard over and over was, 'Thank you for what you are for this community'. That's all I want to hear is that they know, number one, City Team is about God, and they know that this thing is about 'God loves this community' and that message to me is tremendous. And thinking about community in such a broad perceptive and being out there and delivering to people and not many people come to us. I know something maybe I don't even know if I had considered before DeVos - you help people, you help people right." ~Philadelphia

In addition, focus group participants also described the impact of their training within various community organizations. It seems that graduates did not stop at revolutionizing their churches, ministry programs, and communities; they also took the DVULI training and skills to other organizations and began seeing different skills and concepts become a part of the organizations' vocabulary. In addition, community organizations were affected because graduates applied their skills to find resources, filter those resources through community organizations, and then back into their own community. Such stories provide excellent examples of how graduates were able to bring both bridging and linking capital to their communities.

“Even in our agency - you know it's a social work agency - and I'm blessed to be able to have the opportunity to present ‘balance’ and ‘ladder of inference’ and all these things that we learned to impact the agency as a whole...I can create impact in this organization, in this city, as a ‘little worker’, but then even affecting the statewide agency and seeing how some things are slowly working their way up and being able to hear the CEO of the state start to speak in some of the terms and terminologies.” ~ Grand Rapids

“There are times when I go over there to do some kind of consult and they are throwing around concepts and terms and things like that and it turns out they get that from GRIL. And it turns out that in their staff meetings they are talking about all this kind of thing, to the point that ...they are doing solid, substantial culture change in that organization. There are certain values they want to move through everything that they do and they are in a transition, an organization-wide transition.” ~ Grand Rapids

“...and so in February we are going to be celebrating some of those accomplishments so we are going to be taking a tour of some of these organizations and some of these suburban churches... and so all through that collaborative effort we probably will be able to reach 150 counselors and be able to empower some of these useful organizations and agencies within the city.” ~ Indianapolis

The skills graduates learned through the DVULI training also appeared to be impacting community residents as graduates strove to teach community members the DVULI skills and values. Comments from the focus group participants revealed that mentoring skills were not just being applied within individual ministries, but some graduates took the DVULI skills and values and taught them to residents of their own neighborhoods and communities and within their ministry organizations.

“I guess testimony to the depth and the wealth of what we received is the fact that we've started our own organization to pass it on...And in addition to that, graduates are now in leadership with us and graduates of what would be 2nd and 3rd generation...are now meeting alongside us to impact even more and to impact kids as leaders also.” ~ Grand Rapids

Impact on Youth

The next major theme was related to youth programs. DVULI seeks to influence urban youth leaders to improve the lives of inner city youth. This being said, it is important to know if graduates are actually taking the skills they are learning and making a difference in the lives of urban youth. This theme represents 33.9% of the total focus group responses in this section and is described by the following comments:

"So I ended up taking a bunch of kids to this camp that I learned about called Kids Across America. They may take the whole city because it's all impacting the young people - at least a whole school, if not the whole city. I'm more confident now that this is what I need to do and having the best role in the world."

~ Indianapolis

"I sort of worked myself out of a job, because [I] took these skills and placed [them] into the kids and these kids do a great job. I mean, they run with the ministry; I got people coming up to saying, they don't need me no more."

~ Philadelphia

"One guy came in just to do community service. He was 18 years old, had an assault charge, had 40 hours of community service. We pulled him in and his life has been dumped upside down - we got him a job at _____, he's getting his GED, he's now a leader in our church at my youth program and he's just one of the successful guys. You know, guys are coming into the program that have really changed their whole lives and thinking because of the training and the things that I got from DeVos."

~ Denver

Three minor themes emerged as the focus group participants discussed the impact of their training with DVULI on their communities. These included impact on: 1) ministry staff, 2) personal ministry experiences, and 3) a city specifically.

Impact on Ministry Staff

This minor theme represents 6.8% of the total comments in this section. Focus group participants characterize the impact DVULI had on their ministry staff as an important teaching tool. As in the previous major themes, this theme describes graduates taking the skills they learned and transferring the knowledge to others; in these cases, to their ministry partners.

“One of the things that I’ve done was take our staff time because we have two hours of staff meeting and I’ve set aside one hour of that time to teach this whole place on Balance and six weeks I’ve spent hours with our staff about Balance.”
~ Albuquerque

Impact on Personal Ministry Experience

Focus group participants also described personal experiences that resulted from their DVULI training in this section. It seems that some graduates attributed positive personal changes to the DVULI experience and felt that these changes had a direct impact on the community as they did ministry. These comments represent 6.8% of the total responses.

“You know, like my neighbor next-door. Me and him butted heads when we first moved there...it just continues to tie back to that one thing, you know— if you’re a better person, that makes you a better leader, better father, better husband, you’re a better son, better brother, you know what I mean? It just continues to, like God says...the word Christianity is maturity, growing up, and DeVos is just a part of it, it’s just a tool for that process of growing up, no matter how old you are. We’re still growing up.” ~ Denver

“But everybody had a story to tell, and it was exciting to hear it...everybody has a story and everybody’s using it in some fashion.” ~Philadelphia

Impact on a City

The last minor theme discussed by focus group participants included 3.4% of the total responses in this section. Though this is a very small theme, it is included in this section as graduates were specifically asked to describe the impact of their DVULI training on their cities.

"I can create impact in this organization in this city, as a little 'worker.'" ~Grand Rapids

"They may take the whole city because it's all impacting the young people, at least a whole school if not the whole city." ~Indianapolis

Focus Group Results Relating to Mentoring

Mentoring is a key component of the DVULI Initiative's goal of impacting urban youth by investing in their leaders. As DVULI empowers graduates, graduates are then expected to empower other individuals by developing their strengths and leadership abilities for the future. Graduates receive training and learn concepts and skills that teach them to *"recognize the importance of bringing out the best in others."* Mentoring others ensures that graduates are able to delegate responsibilities to others with the confidence that they will have the skills to succeed. This includes mentoring ministry partners as well as urban youth. As graduates complete the DVULI training, they are challenged to re-evaluate their roles as leaders and consider the impact of passing on their leadership skills in order to create lasting change within their communities.

In order to know if graduates actually implemented the mentoring aspect of the DVULI Initiative, focus group participants across the nation were asked, *"Are you mentoring others in leadership development as a result of DVULI training?"* This question generated a total of 15 responses specifically related to ways in which graduates are mentoring others. The major themes that emerged through a theme analysis of these responses include graduates: 1) mentoring other individuals, 2) having a personal mentor, 3) developing mentoring programs specifically for youth, and 4) developing mentoring experiences with their ministry teams.

Mentoring Other Individuals

As focus group participants discussed their mentoring relationships that developed out of the DVULI experience, it was apparent that the majority (60.0%) had developed personal mentoring relationships with other individuals. In these relationships, graduates sought to pass on the knowledge they had gained through DVULI to a mentee and assist that individual with their personal leadership development. Some focus group participants related their efforts to mentor their staff or ministry partners after the Initiative. These graduates also wanted to share the knowledge gained from their experience with others to assist them with growing as youth leaders.

"I took a few people through a lot of the systems thinking and our planning pieces ... we had a community development piece at the church and some people who worked with me and with the young people, I got them engaged in that, so

that they could go ahead and use those resources. And so that's been the main thing, is passing it on, that's what I've really worked hard at.” ~Philadelphia

“We didn't have any predecessors, but this time knowing what other people are going through in youth ministry, I was able to share some experiences and things and walk with them through the whole process, whether it be mentoring, coaching or directing. And so, walking with them through that changed my whole mindset of things.” ~Houston

“I've taught a couple workshops here at the church on this issue of mentoring and the importance of being mentored as leaders that we need to be accountable to other people and we have a lot of young people come into church so parents never darken door and they need to be mentors to some of our children and some of our youth because we've got so many families, fatherless families and kids who need father figures in their lives.” ~Albuquerque

“We're working together as a team to take and train others to do the same thing.”~Houston

Having a Personal Mentor

In addition to mentoring others, focus group participants described an understanding for the need of their own personal mentors when in leadership and described their personal experiences as mentees. This major theme represents 20% of the comments related to mentoring.

“Last year we all, a number of us had mentors.” ~Chicago

“I never really met with very many adults, I was always with kids all the time, in ministry and at home, and having to have that accountability, I started mentoring and being mentored, and so now I've made that a constant habit in my life that I do and it's been so nice, to talk to other people in the ministry and encourage each other and it's made a big difference.” ~Denver

Youth Mentoring Programs

Focus group participants also described mentoring programs that targeted youth. A common characteristic of these programs was that graduates sought to teach youth the skills and concepts they learned through the Initiative. Of the total focus group comments related to mentoring, 20% focused specifically on youth programs.

"I think that we...[use] most of the tools that we learned with the Initiative. We tried to make it youth friendly, to make it more practical for youth to accept and really understand it...we tried to cut off a lot of fat and make it really... as 'kid' - I don't want to say 'friendly' but I don't know a better word. But make it for them to really be able to chew on it. Scenario planning, asset mapping, to do different assessments and just try to take all of that and understand it through who they are." ~ Grand Rapids

"We have a puppet and drama team but we incorporate these skills into it and the older ones get to mentor the younger ones...they take what they learned and train younger [kids] so when [they] go to college, the younger kids step up and keep rotating over and over and they mastered it." ~ Philadelphia

Staying Connected to DVULI Graduates

The Initiative strives to provide graduates with the opportunity to develop a lasting support network among participants. This network creates opportunities to build bonding capital with each other as well as shared bridging and linking capital to benefit the community. However, this objective is dependent on graduates making efforts to stay connected with each other. Each of the core values taught serve to reinforce the need for collaborative relationships which can result in resource linkage, feedback and accountability between graduates, and opportunities for partnership within communities. Collaborative relationships between DVULI graduates can have a synergistic outcome within the community that would not have been possible without graduates continuing their communication after the Initiative.

Focus Group Results

To find out if graduates were staying connected, the following focus group question was asked: *"Estimate the percentage of DVULI grads you talk to (phone, email, etc) in a typical month." What sort of things do you discuss? Have you planned or been involved in any community projects with them? Describe."* As focus group participants responded to these questions across the nation, a total of 133 comments were generated. The major themes that resulted from a content analysis include responses related to: 1) general comments about staying in touch with each other, 2) subjects of communication, and 3) local DVULI partnership activities that helped graduates maintain contact. Actual estimates of the percentage of graduates they talked to each month varied so widely it was not possible to develop a reliable average percentage.

Staying in Touch

In this major theme, focus group participants revealed varying frequencies of communication. While the majority communicate with each other and collaborate frequently, a few have not stayed in touch. This major theme represents 43.2% of the total focus group responses regarding lasting DVULI relationships. Within this theme, several minor themes emerged and are listed in descending order by occurrence: 1) frequent communication and collaboration between graduates, 2) graduates communicating in the past, 3) no communication with other graduates, and 4) a rekindled connection that resulted from the focus group itself.

The vast majority of responses in this category described activities and current communication between graduates that have served to support graduates spiritually, emotionally, and even financially at times. Through email, telephone calls, and small groups, graduates have successfully perpetuated the DVULI collaborative relationships. Those graduates who have nurtured the relationships developed through the Initiative gained a supportive ministry family that can be understood through the following comments:

"You say you all are just friends, I kind of think we are family. Family that I want to be around.... People that got the same heartbeat as you and we've been in a war together and so that kind of like builds on camaraderie." ~ Houston

"And we might only see each other once a year but it's like we've never parted kind of thing. There is that trust that is so deep that you just jump right back in and for those who may not be doing right, you can confront [them] in a second and they know they are going to listen to you because of the connection that we do have." ~ Grand Rapids

"I think it helped me not feel so alone, because I honestly felt very alone in ministry. Just me, and if I don't have the answer I better make one up [because] I don't know where else to turn. Especially now that I'm in this position where I'm way the heck over my head, I'm glad I've got people now to turn to [because] I don't have all the answers and the ones I make up would probably be horrible, so you know for me that was good." ~ Denver

"I think what we've decided to do in terms of looking at our own identity as urban ministers, our relationship to our significant others and to look at strengthening families and strengthening our own relationships, personal relationships, that's been the reason why I keep coming back to this group ...it's helped me re-root myself as to who I am as a person in relationship to my marriage. And that's where we are right now...who knows where we'll be next year. I think we'll keep growing as a group. You know, like you've been with your guys for 10 years now, we've been together for 6 years so." ~ Chicago

The next minor theme that emerged as graduated described their relationships with other DVULI graduates was related to focus group participants who had been in contact with other graduates in the past but have not continued communicating with others. A few graduates expressed regret over the lack of communication while others described the result of the past contact.

"I have on a couple instances, but actually job related - I was working in Santa Fe an hour from here, so a lot of time just up until April was just because of working and other things kept me preoccupied." ~Albuquerque

"I'm going to try again. It's funny though because at the Christmas party I'm seeing kids that I had not connected up with them, but guess what, they still got connected. You know what I'm saying, I'm thinking about the youth that [he] was working with but yet they are still passing because those kids are telling other kids that are telling kids that I know. ... we have those outlets for those young people, they are connected and they are connecting each other. They are doing it themselves." ~Indianapolis

A few focus group participants also describe an almost complete lack of communication and collaboration with other DVULI graduates after the Initiative. This was attributed to personal neglect and lack of response from others.

"It's partially my fault too but I just haven't had a lot of contact so I can't speak too much on that." ~Albuquerque

"I call [him] all the time - he never calls me back, but I call him." ~Denver

Interestingly, a few focus group participants took advantage of being reunited with other graduates and began planning future collaborations that could result in a rekindling of communication between these graduates.

"We [are], however,...interested and I talked to _____ who comes each year ... [I] asked him, I said, 'Could we have a venue to teach our DeVos training during Reload?' and he was excited about that, so I wanted throw that out to the group tonight - be thinking about that and even if only three people [are] interested, we could still do maybe a couple workshops, but so that's a start and the foundation supports the Urban Youth Leader Institute which is Reload. They are already supporting it financially; I think that's a place for us to start." ~ Albuquerque

"I'd certainly be open if we wanted to use this church and do something. If we did once a quarter, maybe not even that often to start off with and you want success and not failure but if we did twice a year and had a workshop and maybe some of us can facilitate the training and can invite any of your kids or youth or whatever, or your workers or volunteers to come and be a part of that may be a good starting place. But for me, I say, 'Hey, this is God's house and it's open to anything we want to use it for'." ~ Albuquerque

Subjects of Communication

An additional major theme that emerged as focus group participants discussed continued communication with other DVULI graduates was related to specific topics of communication. This major theme represents 15.9% of the total focus group responses for this question. Within this theme, graduates described the different reasons for communicating with each other including: 1) obtaining personal support and mentoring, 2) to plan future projects, and 3) for resource linkage.

Several focus group participants described group meetings, telephone calls, and personal outings that served as a supportive experience. These connections addressed individual difficulties, family concerns, and ministry questions. Graduates described a mentoring process that occurred not only at the individual level but also among small city groups through trainings

and online connections. It appeared that a major reason graduates continued to connect outside of the Initiative was to maintain a personal support system for individual concerns as well as ministry concerns.

"Whether it's [he] and I getting ready to go to a movie, we always end up talking about something dealing with our core values, even if it is our own personal core values. It [the Initiative] is just something that taught us how to really look at ourselves and accept ourselves as the leaders that we were designed to be. And hold each other accountable and not to be afraid to speak truth to one another. It taught us to be a community - it really taught us to really be a community."
~ Grand Rapids

"There are times that I don't necessarily send an e-mail to ask a question because I already know I'm going to be inundated with answers...we are just ready to help each other.... It's a blessing, it's comforting to know you have that kind of help at your fingertips and somebody may just say, 'You know what, I don't have an answer but I'm praying with you.'" ~Houston

"This last year we talked about the core values and we ran workshops for each other. So, that was last year's grant. And this year's grant is focusing on strengthening our families and we're going to have two retreats." ~ Chicago

Focus group participants also described communication that involved planning for future projects. This minor theme is characterized by collaborations that occurred outside of the DVULI Initiative and within graduates' own communities. Through focus group meetings, online communication, and personal contacts, these graduates continued communicating with each other to develop projects, combine efforts, and learn from each other.

"In Grand Rapids, they actually created a mini DeVos Initiative, where they are doing this kind of stuff in the community...we have talked to them initially about how they did that because we were interested..." ~ Albuquerque

"I think all of us have plans and ideas; it's just trying to figure out how we are going to network together and really make it happen." ~ Denver

"We did meet too, about two weeks ago maybe, to begin to brainstorm what...are our projects and a lot of great ideas came out of that. so I mean we're on the cusp of ... working together, combining these two classes." ~Houston

An addition reason for communication discussed by the focus group participants involved resource linkage between graduates. After the Initiative, some of the focus group participants took advantage of the relationships they had developed at the DVULI training and contact their peers regarding resources. Other graduates made it their personal responsibility to link other

graduates in the area with resources, thus further promoting bridging capital within the community.

"[He] always keeps me informed on stuff that is coming out, he sent me an e-mail about a purity conference that they had not too long ago and they actually got in contact with the pastor there ... and I went out and was able to give out some of my information on the ministry so that was kind of cool and it was kind of neat. I really haven't had to promote it much, so I've had opportunity there to promote it." ~ Albuquerque

"I think I met her one time - she was doing the project [and] needed funds or help...they sent an e-mail out." ~ Houston

Local DVULI Partnership Activities

The final major theme that emerged as focus group participants discussed continued communication with other DVULI graduates was related to local DVULI partnership activities. Within this theme, graduates describe the results of continued communication after the Initiative. In all, 40.6 % of the focus group comments regarding graduates' continued communication with other graduates fell within this theme and it is further divided into minor themes that describe the types of activities graduates engaged in collaboratively. Local DVULI partnership activities include graduates partnering to: 1) develop and implement youth programs, 2) develop and implement programs for youth ministry workers, 3) partner with DVULI groups from other cities or groups from other organizations, and 4) planning for future activities.

As focus group participants described the activities their local partnerships engaged in, developing and implementing youth programs was at the fore front of the discussions across the various cities represented. Graduates continued to work together to develop programs, write curricula, and reach out to urban youth as a collaborative effort.

"Sisters Soldiers was an idea we had just finished with a group of girls and we had thrown so much at them and material and it wasn't really organized ... when I went through the Initiative it was really important to figure out how to put it together so it was something that would be able to be used and be would be able to train up other young girls not only learn about purity and the relationship with the Lord, but also to be next generation of mentors and leaders in their community I can't even begin to tell you what DeVos did to start that - I mean, meeting everybody and getting their input, I mean _____ played a big part of putting together this study and he gave us a template, on what we needed and he's like, ' OK, figure out what you want to put in there, this is the template,' and so he did one study for us and we followed that and now we have an 11 week study." ~ Albuquerque

"He and I did some things together in terms of tennis and we organized a block party and we brought some people in and we had a high school from the suburbs come in and brought their tennis team in to teach these inner city kids how to play tennis. _____ got involved and they brought sandwiches and raised money for tennis racquets and tennis balls for all these kids. Most of those kids came out of Sun Valley, where _____ and _____ work. We have now moved into the USTA [U.S. Tennis Association] to give grants out of \$2,500 dollars for development, and they desperately need something like that in Sun Valley." ~ Denver

"In the ministry I was a part of until a year ago, we started, through the initiative, relationships that were developed in our city group. We started a 3-on-3 basketball tournament and we collaborated together. It was myself and two other graduates the first year. And it just kept growing every year... and it was bigger than [it] ever had been and it was just [a] very neighborhood-focused event. People come out of their houses to hang out on the street and watch kids shoot hoops for a whole day. And there is a gospel message and food and I mean it is a community event and it's a lot of different churches, different denominations, different races, and it's just everybody coming together to celebrate the community." ~ Grand Rapids

In addition to focus group participants' comments on collaborative programs for youth, they also discussed collaborative approaches to training other youth leaders and networking with them. In this minor theme, graduates discussed their efforts to work together developing programs that target other youth leaders and engage them in a collaborative effort.

"...One of the things that I was talking to _____, who went through the Initiative in 2005 and we were talking about just bringing all of the urban youth workers together once a month for a fellowship meal, like in the evening time ... we were talking about doing that to start off with, to get acquainted with our urban youth workers, with the goal in mind that we would offer training we received through DeVos once a year." ~ Albuquerque

"Last year at this time you connected me with _____. Last Saturday his whole master's commission came for an event up at _____ Hospital. And I trained nine other master's commissions to partner with high schools." ~ Chicago

"We formed a collaboration together with youth partners network, you know? Part of a convention works thing, and...it's still going on." ~ Denver

"...GRIL... DeVos in a year. Basically we take 8-10 new participants - same criteria, same stuff - teach the same stuff. In a year they graduate and we teach another group. And now we are moving into the kid sector of doing the same curriculum with kids of those people who have graduated from either DeVos or GRIL ...It is

just a year instead of 15 months that DeVos is and we do it every other month, Saturdays - all day trainings, teaching, tool skills, all that good stuff...same as DeVos just lower budget.” ~ Grand Rapids

Focus group participants also described efforts and the effects of partnering with other city groups including those that had completed the DVULI training and those that would serve to advance their ministry objective. In this minor theme, it appears that the focus group participants not only wanted to create greater capacity for change but wanted to learn from each other and build on projects that were working in other cities.

*“There are times when I go over there to do some kind of consult and they are throwing around concepts and terms and things like that and it turns out they get that from GRIL and it turns out that in their staff meetings they are talking about all this kind of thing.... I won't say that GRIL has initiated the change, but they are doing solid, substantial culture change in that organization. There are certain values - they want to move through everything that they do and they are in a transition; an organization-wide transition. And GRIL has had an influence on that and unless you are there and you happen to hear about it I don't think it would come back to GRIL that they even know that they had that influence.”
~ Grand Rapids*

“...He and some of the other DVULI leaders here, team mates, ... we could go throughout the city and then it went beyond just the Houston group, then they brought in _____ from another DVULI graduate class and brought him in. So I believe Houston is definitely a beacon light - that we're not just with each other, shining our lights, but we're going out further to the other participants from other cities. So I believe that the best is yet to come in that regard because we are all finding out what gifts we have and then everybody is bringing those gifts to the table and then sharing them and then going beyond that.” ~ Houston

“[They] last year partnered with the chaplaincy program and the youth center to do Christmas and I think that is when we got that little grant from DeVos and we partnered. And I have never done that and I did...that ministry in 20 years and I could not afford it.” ~ Indianapolis

The last minor theme that emerged as focus group participants describe their local DVULI partnership activities includes comments related to the experience of planning future projects together. Graduates often discussed future programs or collaborative efforts. They dreamed together and laid the foundation for their dreams of impacting their communities. Some of those dreams have been accomplished while others continue to develop.

“Basically, what _____ and I had been thinking about doing - how do we empower the leaders who are already in place? I mean, how do we make the

connections with the leaders who are there and figure out how we can get them connected with the kids that will be coming out of the facility.” ~ Denver

*“I’m thinking in terms of those conferences put on here in our city. We have so much to offer to this ring that we have gotten from DeVos to be able to share it. And it’s something that’s doable for us too, if we just focus in on a breakthrough plan for our ministry correctly and know how to do it... I even think of _____ and doing workshops there, of us working together to put on workshops there.”
~ Chicago*

“ _____ was talking and I was talking. _____ wanted to be part of something and so GRIL was just a birth out of ideas. I was just, ‘Well, maybe we should just do something together. A mini-DeVos.’ ~ Grand Rapids

Summary

In attempt to indirectly measure community impact, the Alumni Survey asked a series of questions about graduates’ involvement in their community following DVULI training. Results show that graduates almost doubled the number of youth they ministered to within a six-month period, from 166 to 304 youth. They also trained an average of 128 individuals and mentored 10.6 people every six months. Such findings highlight the commitment of graduates to expand the network of individuals who are involved in leadership within their communities. These influences extend the reach of the DVULI values and skills and make positive community impact more likely as a result. Training and mentoring once again illustrates the bonding and bridging capital that graduates were able to help graduates develop with people within their communities. As these relationships were strengthened through training and mentoring, those who were trained and mentored became more prepared to connect to other individuals and resources, thereby strengthening their churches and communities.

In addition, they had brought in an average of 2.8 grants per person into their organizations and had raised approximately \$19 million in grants or donations, for an average of around \$50,000 per person. Grant applications and actual grant dollars and donations highlight the action of linking capital, that form of social capital that can be seen as vertical connection between underprivileged individuals and people in positions of power in official organizations. By bringing in new dollars to their communities, graduates were able to link services and activities to the community in ways that created improvements.

As focus group participants discussed how DVULI training had impacted their communities and cities, several themes emerged. First, graduates discussed improvements that resulted in community residents’ living situations and experiences, changes in community organizations through the implementation of DVULI concepts, and graduates’ experiences with teaching the DVULI skills to community residents themselves.

Second, focus group participants described the impact of their training within various community organizations. It seems that graduates did not stop at revolutionizing their churches, ministry programs, and communities; they also took the DVULI training and skills to other organizations and began seeing different skills and concepts become a part of the organizations' vocabulary. In addition, community organizations were affected because graduates applied their skills to find resources, filter those resources through community organizations, and then back into their own community. Such stories provide excellent examples of how graduates were able to bring both bridging and linking capital to their communities.

Third, the skills graduates learned through the DVULI training also appeared to be impacting community residents as graduates strove to teach community members the DVULI skills and values. Comments from the focus group participants revealed that mentoring skills were not just being applied within individual ministries, but some graduates took the DVULI skills and values and taught them to residents of their own neighborhoods and communities and within their ministry organizations.

Graduates also believed that DVULI training had impacted the youth in their community. Graduates described a number of programs and activities that illustrated their involvement with the youth of their communities. Sometimes these trainings ended up impacting other ministry partners as well.

Mentoring is another key component of the Initiative's goal of impacting urban youth by investing in their leaders. As DVULI empowers graduates, graduates are then expected to empower other individuals by developing their strengths and leadership abilities for the future. Graduates receive training and learn concepts and skills that teach them to *"recognize the importance of bringing out the best in others."* Mentoring others ensures that graduates are able to delegate responsibilities to others with the confidence that they will have the skills to succeed. This includes mentoring ministry partners as well as urban youth. As graduates complete the DVULI training, they are challenged to re-evaluate their roles as leaders and consider the impact of passing on their leadership skills in order to create lasting change within their communities.

Graduates were able to describe a number of mentoring relationships, including mentoring others, having their own personal mentors, developing mentoring programs for youth to pass along DVULI values and skills, and developing mentoring experiences for their ministry teams.

Another DVULI goal is to have graduates establish personal and ministry networks between other graduates in their own city and other cities. This network creates opportunities to build bonding capital with each other as well as shared bridging and linking capital to benefit the community. However, this objective is dependent on graduates making efforts to stay connected with each other. Each of the core values taught serve to reinforce the need for collaborative relationships which can result in resource linkage, feedback and accountability between graduates, and opportunities for partnership within communities. Collaborative

relationships between DVULI graduates can have a synergistic outcome within the community that would not have been possible without graduates continuing their communication after the Initiative.

Graduates were able to talk specifically about how they stayed in touch with each other through telephone, emails and small groups. They also discussed difficulties they sometimes had maintaining that regular communication. Interestingly, the event of the focus groups led to several city groups to begin planning activities during the group meeting.

Graduates' primary reasons for communication were to obtain personal and ministry support and mentoring, plan future projects, and to use each other as a resource linkage. The most common partnership activities included developing and implementing youth programs, programs for youth ministry workers, partnering with DVULI groups from other cities or groups from other organizations, and planning for future activities.

Section III

The Road Ahead

"The DeVos experience was one of the most beneficial training experiences I have participated in. It radically began a process of redirecting my life and ministry. I would not be where I am today without the DeVos experience."

Chapter 11

Looking to the Future

Exploring Differences and Suggesting Changes

One major advantage of conducting the DVULI Alumni Survey is that it provides an opportunity to compare questions across a number of different categories in order to better understand where differences exist in the graduates' responses. So, for example, we can compare how men responded to questions differently than women. This provides an opportunity for us to begin drawing tentative conclusions about differences between these groups, ultimately leading to suggestions and recommendations for program improvement. However, before beginning these comparisons, two major cautions are important to note.

First, as can be seen throughout this report, the responses of most of the graduates were highly positive on most questions that required them to choose options ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. In fact, on most questions, most graduates selected either Agree or Strongly Agree as their response choices. While this provides overwhelmingly positive support for the success of the program, it makes comparisons between groups more difficult because there is very little variation to compare. This led us to make most group comparisons in the form of percentages only within the Strongly Agree category. Our general rule of thumb was that any differences that were 10% or greater would be noted and graphed so the reader could more closely examine the differences between the two groups. However, the reader should remain aware that the differences in the Strongly Agree categories were often counter-balanced in the opposite direction when these groups were compared within the Agree category. So, for example, 33% of women, compared to 25% of men, Strongly Agreed that DVULI training helped them earn a better position. However, 21% of women, compared to 26% of men, Agreed with this same question. If those results were added together, 51% of men and 54% of women either Agree or Strongly Agree that DVULI helped them earn a better position – only a 3% difference. As a result, readers are strongly cautioned to see these differences as a sign of the strength of support for a particular question (the difference between someone who merely agrees vs. someone who strongly agrees), rather than as strong differences in agreement vs. disagreement between the groups.

The second caution is related to the first. Even though some important differences do exist between groups, there were many questions that did not show any, or very few, significant differences between groups. For example, in the analysis that compares men to women, we compared gender responses across more than 70 questions; only eight questions showed an 8% or greater difference between the two groups. As such, the reader is again cautioned against making too much of the differences that do occur since many of the questions show few differences at all.

In summary, this means that when differences do occur, one must be very cautious to interpret them within the knowledge that the program shows a high degree of success with ALMOST ALL graduates who responded to the survey. Those areas where differences do occur are different in the strength of the respondents' responses but not in graduates' perceptions of the overall success of the program.

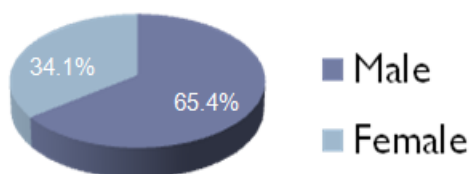
As a final note, readers should refer to Appendix A in order to view a condensed version of the DVULI Alumni Survey. This will provide the reader with a guide to the entire list of questions that were included in the analyses in this chapter. As will be seen from this guide, the questions were divided into sections that will be used as major headings throughout most of the charts that follow in this section. Sections include: 1) *Personal Improvement*, which includes 14 questions relating to the degree to which graduates believed DVULI training improved their ministry, increased their ability to care for themselves, and strengthened their faith and community commitments; 2) *Core Values*, which includes five questions asking graduates how often they practiced each of the DVULI core values; 3) *Breakthrough Skills*, which includes seven questions asking graduates how often they practiced each of the DVULI skills; 4) *Vision and Mission*, which includes eight questions related to the degree to which the Initiative training helped graduates both develop and implement a clear vision and mission; 5) *Breakthrough Plan*, which includes four questions asking graduates to what extent they had accomplished their plan and believed it to have impacted their ministry; 6) *Community Involvement*, which includes five questions asking graduates how involved they were in a variety of community activities; 7) *Ongoing Challenges*, which includes eight questions relating to challenges that emerged as a result of DVULI training; 8) *Vocational Impact*, which includes seven questions asking graduates the extent to which DVULI training had helped them remain and thrive in ministry; and 9) which includes 11 questions on the impact of those activities on youth, adults, and organizations within their communities.

The sections that follow will review the differences in strong agreement in areas of gender, age of graduates, number of years in ministry, year of graduation, hours of ministry worked per week, paid vs. volunteer status, city size, and youth ministry continuation.

Gender

Of the 271 graduates who completed the DVULI Alumni Survey, 34.1% were female and 65.4% were male (see Figure 11.1). Because there were so few differences between men and women on the majority of the questions, Table 11.1 compares men with women across all sections and questions of the question guide. Within the section *Personal Improvement*, only one question, “*DVULI improved how I care for my physical needs*” showed a relatively large difference. In this question, 82% of women either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement compared with 68% of men, a 14% difference.

FIGURE 11.1



Although this would appear to indicate that women benefited more from training in physical care, the lack of differences in other areas indicates that both male and female graduates considered DVULI training to be almost equally effective in creating a wide variety of personal improvements in their lives.

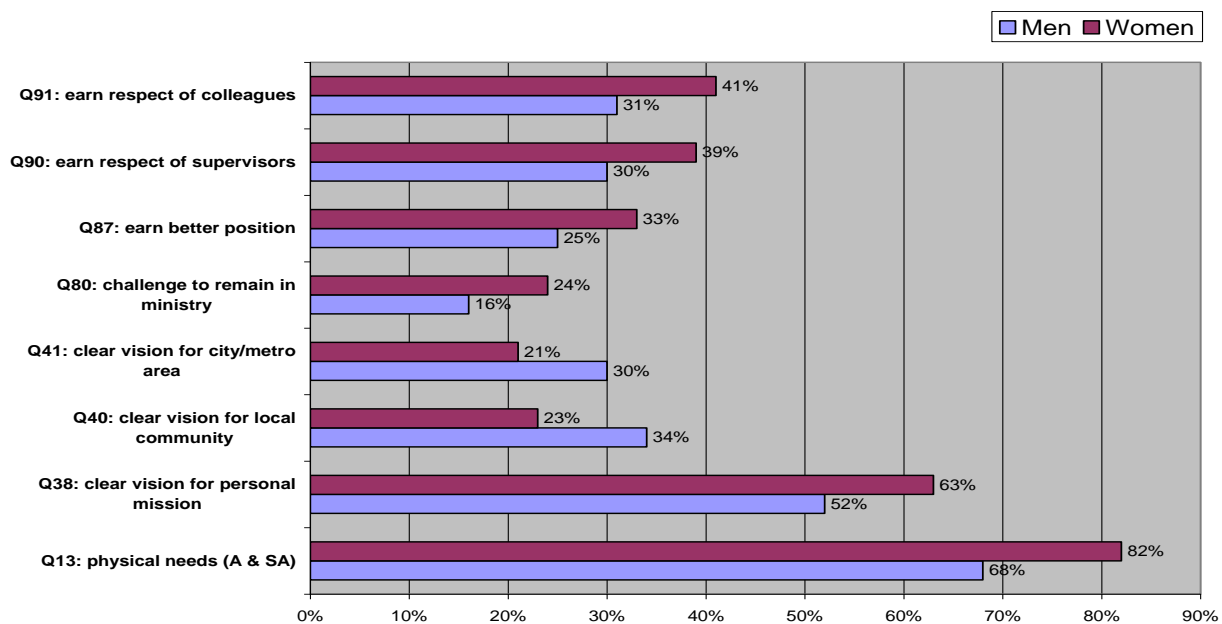
In the sections *Core Values* and *Breakthrough Skills*, only one question (out of 12 questions in these two sections) showed an interesting difference. The question “*I practice interdependence...daily; weekly; monthly; rarely; never*” showed that women were more likely than men (83% vs. 73%) to practice interdependence on a regular basis. This may indicate that, compared to men, women often focus more strongly on relationships and connect and delegate more comfortably with others. Again, perhaps the more important finding is that none of the rest of the values or skills showed any substantial differences between men and women, leading us to conclude that the DVULI training sessions were equally successful in transmitting these areas of the curriculum to both men and women.

In the section that explored *Vision and Mission*, women believed they had a clearer sense of their personal mission. This difference may reflect the additional clarity that women gained in this area. On the other hand, men were more likely than women to Strongly Agree that they had a clearer sense of mission to their local community and city or metro area. This may reflect men’s generally stronger external orientation toward their community and city.

In other sections, while women found it somewhat more challenging to remain in ministry than men, they were also more likely than men to Strongly Agree that DVULI training helped them earn a better position, as well as earn the respect of both their supervisors and colleagues. Such findings may indicate that women, in their work environments, felt that DVULI training helped empower them and give them greater credibility and legitimacy than they had experienced prior to the Initiative.

TABLE 11.1

Men vs. Women

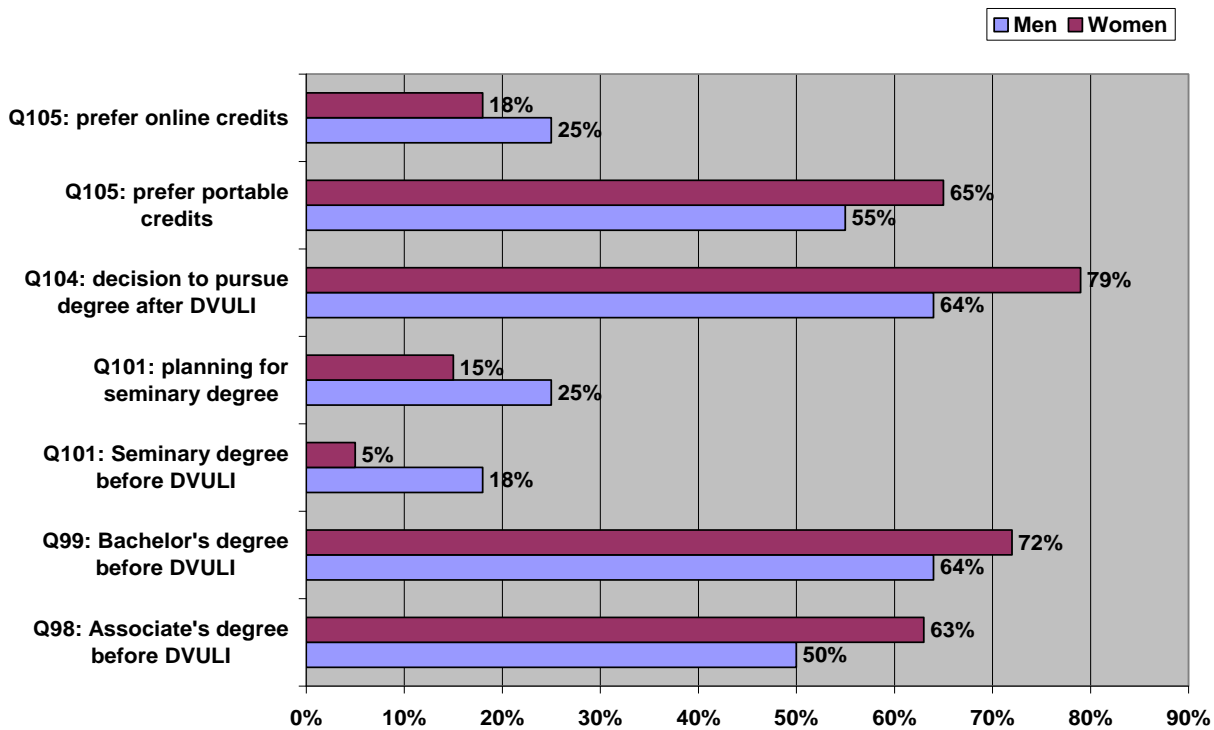


Education

Table 11.2 shows that women also differed in some areas from men in educational level and interest. For example, women were more likely than men to have had both an Associate's degree (63% vs. 50%) and a Bachelor's degree (72% vs. 64%) prior to beginning DVULI training. However, they were less likely to have had a seminary degree than men (5% vs. 18%) as well as less likely to be planning to complete a seminary degree (15% vs. 25%). Of those who decided to pursue additional education since beginning DVULI training, women were more likely than men to say that their decision to pursue that degree was either Somewhat or Greatly influenced by their DVULI training (79% vs. 64%). Women were also more interested than men in receiving portable degree credits (65% vs. 55%) and less interested in receiving academic credits through an online degree program (18% vs. 25%). Please refer to the report titled "*The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Assessing the Need for Academic Credit*" written by our research team for further details on education statistics and recommendations. It is important to note that we do not believe that the statistics found in Table 1B should substantially change our recommendations from this report.

TABLE 11.2

Men vs. Women x Education



Community Impact

Table 11.3 examines the impact of gender in a number of key areas, with yellow highlighting used to indicate areas of significant difference. There were virtually no differences between men and women in terms of the number of youth ministered to before DVULI training. However, following DVULI training, men estimated that they served approximately 50 more youth every six months than women did. In contrast, women estimated that they trained 25 more individuals every six month than the men did. Since these numbers reflect estimates rather than actual counts, these differences should be treated with caution. However, such findings are consistent with the somewhat stereotypical generalization that men may focus more strongly on larger program impact while women may be more likely to focus on more individualized, relational training experiences. There were no substantial differences in impact in any of the other categories.

TABLE 11.3

Community Impact x Gender	Men	Women
Q56: Youth ministered BEFORE DVULI	157	160
Q57: Youth ministered AFTER DVULI	254	200
Q58: Individuals mentored	10	9
Q59: Individuals trained	85	110
Q60: Graduates you communicate with per month	3	3
Q61: Community projects with graduates in your city	3	2
Q62: Organizations you partnered with	9	8
Q63: Projects joined with other organizations	4	4
Q64: Projects or programs you developed	3	3
Q65: Grants you helped bring into your organization	2	2
Q66: Dollars raised in grants or donations	48,368	33,721

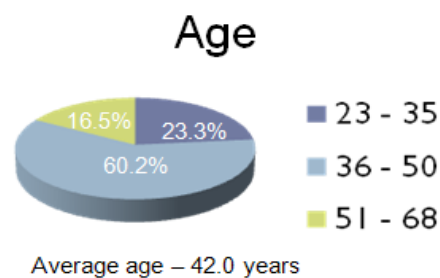
Summary and Recommendations

Given the relatively few differences between genders, we can confidently state that the Initiative was generally perceived to be equally successful by both male and female graduates. This is an important finding because some leadership training programs show stronger effects for one or the other gender. However, the Initiative appears to have achieved its positive results fairly consistently across both genders, leading us to conclude that no substantial changes are needed in the curriculum to address gender imbalances in leadership training.

Age

Of the 272 graduates who completed the DVULI Alumni Survey, 23.3% were between the ages of 23 – 35 years, 60.2% were between the ages of 36 – 50 years, and 16.5% were between the ages of 51 – 68 years (see Figure 11.2). The average age of all participants was 42.0 years.

FIGURE 11.2

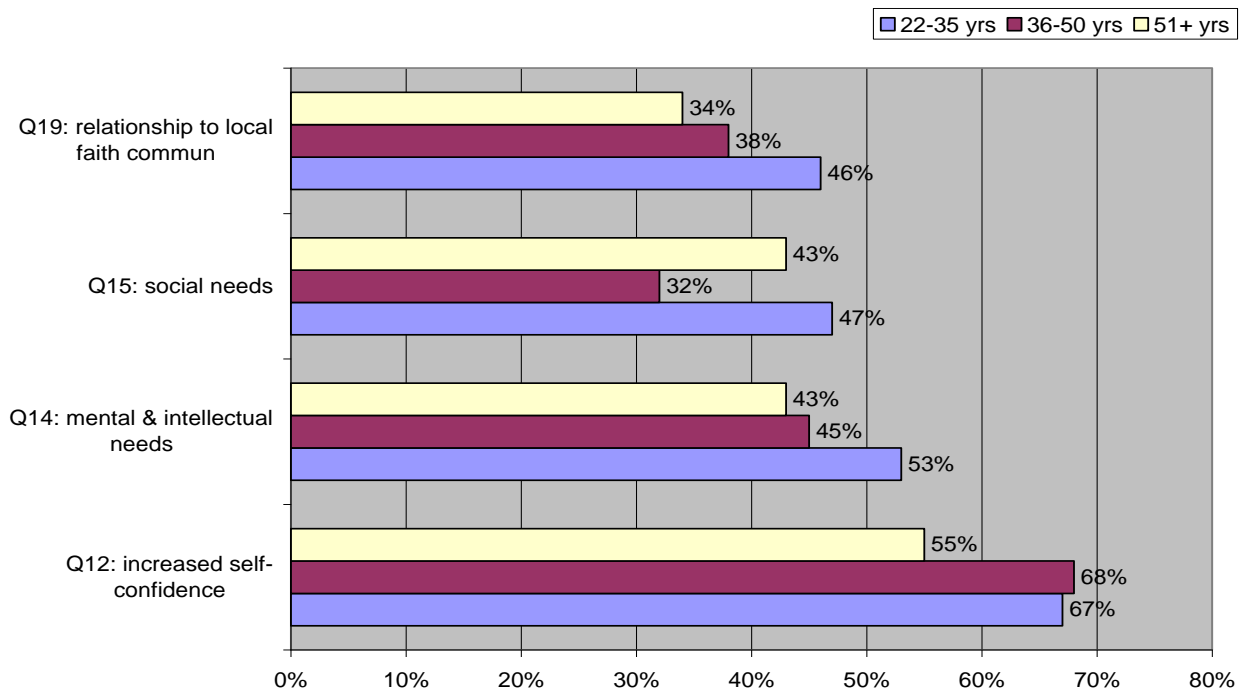


Personal Improvements

Within the section *Personal Improvements*, Table 11.4 shows the four questions (out of 14 total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. The younger participants believed they had gained the largest personal improvements in all four areas, with the oldest graduates experiencing the lowest perceived improvements in three of the four questions. This trend may reflect younger graduates' need for such leadership training, particularly at the early, formational stages of their careers. Increasing self-confidence is particularly noteworthy among the younger and middle aged group of graduates, perhaps indicating that DVULI training most greatly benefited those who had less community status relative to older participants. This may also help to explain why younger graduates, relative to older grads, feel more strongly that their relationship with a local faith community had been strengthened by the Initiative. Specifically, we would expect that younger graduates would be less integrated into their local faith community than older graduates who have more established ministries and more confidence in their leadership skills.

TABLE 11.4

Age of Graduates x Personal Improvements



Values & Breakthrough Skills

Within the sections *Values* and *Breakthrough Skills*, Table 11.5 shows the six questions (out of 12 total questions in these two sections) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference when combining their Daily and Weekly practice response rates.

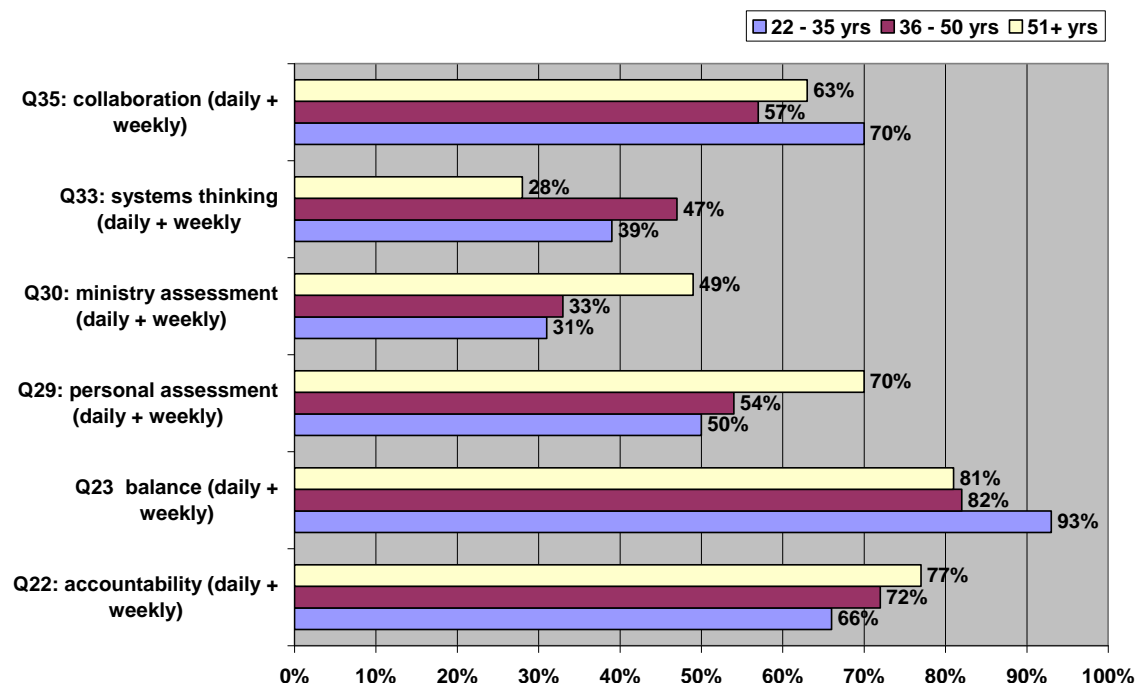
In the values area, older graduates were most likely to practice accountability on a regular basis, with younger graduates the least likely to practice those values. These findings may reflect more intentional planning on the part of older graduates due to greater perceived needs in this area. Or, perhaps older graduates are more comfortable with their station in life and therefore more willing to hold themselves accountable to others on a regular basis.

On the other hand, younger graduates were more likely than middle and older age graduates to practice the value of balance on a daily or weekly basis. This may be a more critical and immediate value for younger graduates because they often have heavy family and other commitments at this stage in their lives and ministries. For example, many graduates were attempting to balance the needs of early marriages, young children, and school with early-stage ministry commitments. These commitments alone might also help to explain why

younger graduates were less likely to practice accountability – they may well have less overall time than other graduates to meet yet one more commitment.

TABLE 11.5

Age x Values & Breakthrough Skills



In the skills area, older graduates used both personal and ministry assessment tools much more frequently than middle and younger age graduates. Such findings may reflect more frequent opportunities to use such skills on the part of older graduates or may reflect the reality that younger and middle age graduates are perhaps more likely to find themselves in subordinate positions that do not allow them to use these skills as frequently as older graduates. Another possible explanation is that perhaps the Initiative helped older graduates to refresh and re-vitalize their ministries, causing them to use new assessment tools more regularly.

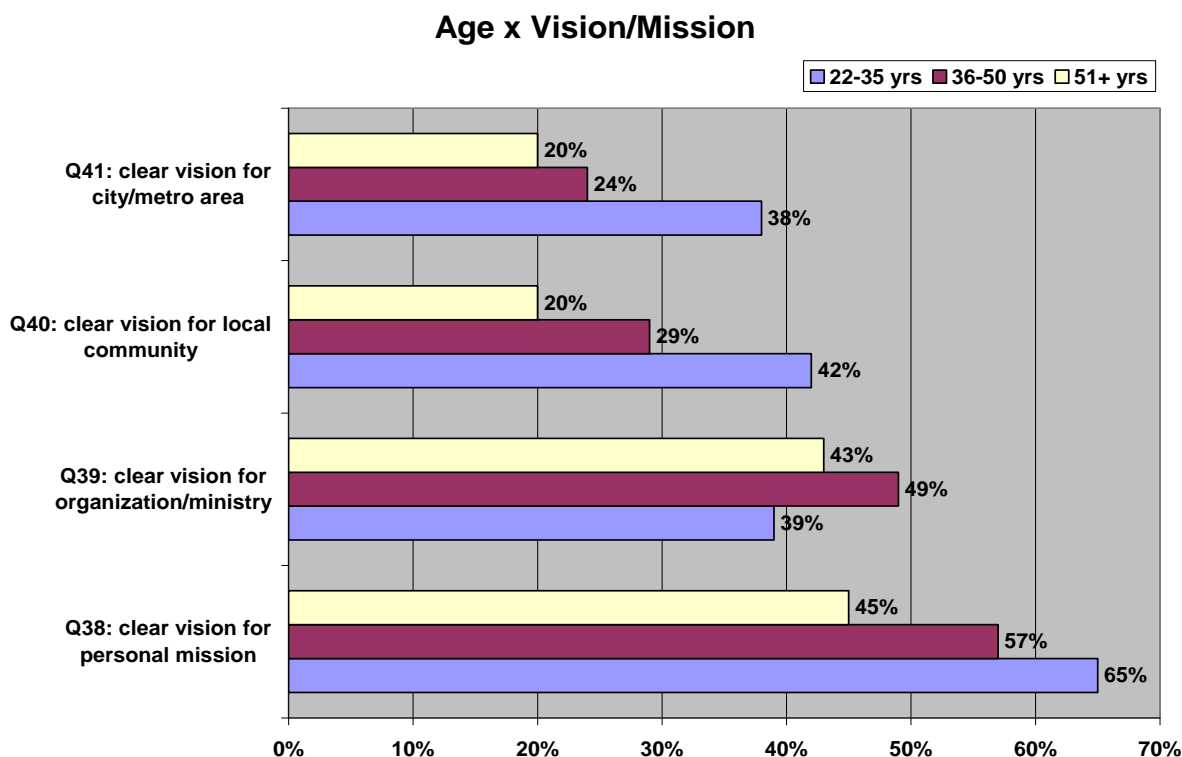
On the other hand, middle age graduates were most likely to use systems thinking on a regular basis, while collaboration skills were most likely to be used by younger graduates. It is perhaps predictable that younger graduates would use collaboration skills more regularly since they are still in the process of learning to build their community networks. The relatively lower use of systems thinking is particularly striking and could perhaps reflect the major paradigm shift that older graduates face in thinking systemically across their entire ministry and community.

Vision and Mission

Within the section *Vision and Mission*, combined Table 11.6 shows that four questions (out of eight total questions in this section) showed at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. Younger graduates once again most strongly agreed with three of four questions, believing they had a clear vision for their personal mission, their local community, and their city/metro area. Middle age graduates most strongly agreed that they had a clear vision for their organization or ministry.

Such findings may again indicate the greater excitement that younger graduates often feel when they gain new ministry tools and begin thinking about how to shape their vision and mission for their emerging ministries.

TABLE 11.6



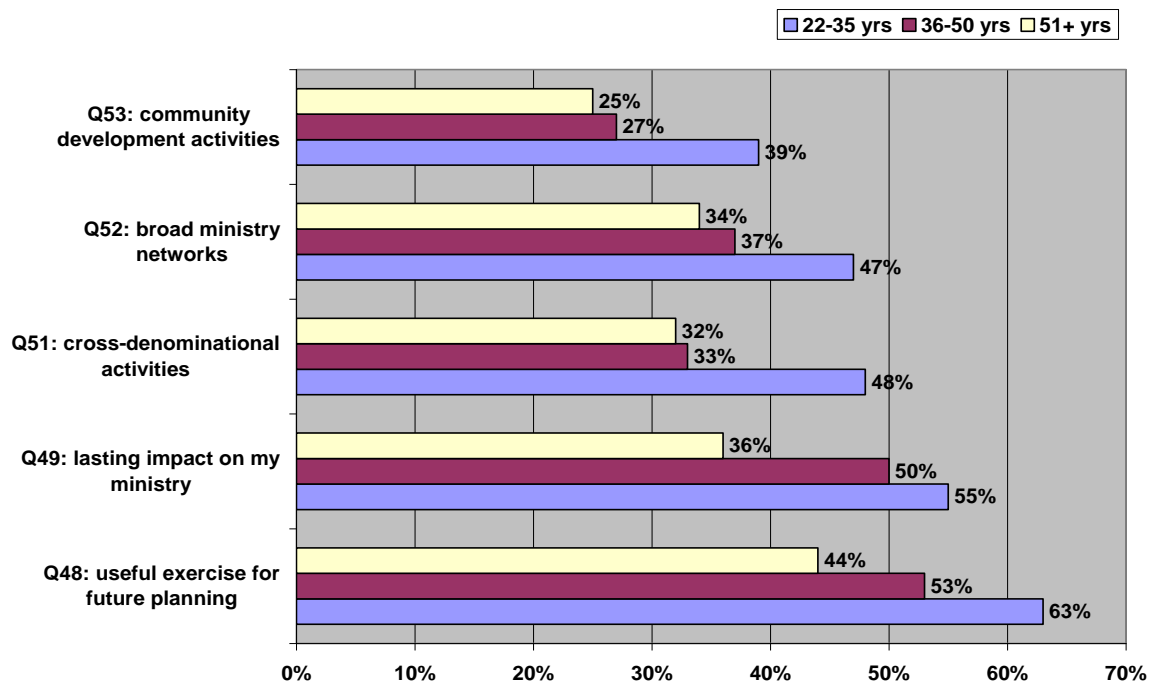
Breakthrough Plan and Community Involvement

Within the sections *Breakthrough Plan* and *Community Involvement*, combined Table 11.7 shows that five questions (out of nine total questions in these two sections) showed at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. Younger graduates most strongly agreed with all five of the questions, particularly when compared with older graduates. Specifically, in

the breakthrough plan questions, younger graduates were much more likely than older graduates to strongly agree that the breakthrough plan was a useful exercise with a lasting impact on their ministry. This may reflect the excitement that younger graduates often feel in gaining new ministry tools and their overall exuberance in changing the world for the better.

TABLE 11.7

Age x Breakthrough Plan & Community Involvement



Young graduates were also more likely than both middle and older graduates to strongly agree that DVULI training led them to greater involvement in cross-denominational activities, broad ministry networks, and community development activities. Such findings may indicate a greater openness on the part of younger graduates in reaching out to other ministry and community organizations. It may also reflect a willingness to adopt a more inclusive paradigm when dealing with other denominations or community-based organizations. Alternatively, lower rates of agreement on the part of older and middle age graduates may reflect that these groups were already more networked across the community, leaving them less need to grow and change in this area than younger graduates.

Ongoing Challenges

Within the section *Ongoing Challenges*, Table 11.8 shows six questions (out of eight total questions in this section) with at least a 10% difference when Strongly Agree and Agree response rates are added together. In every comparison, the younger graduates believed they were experiencing sometimes substantially greater levels of challenges than either the middle

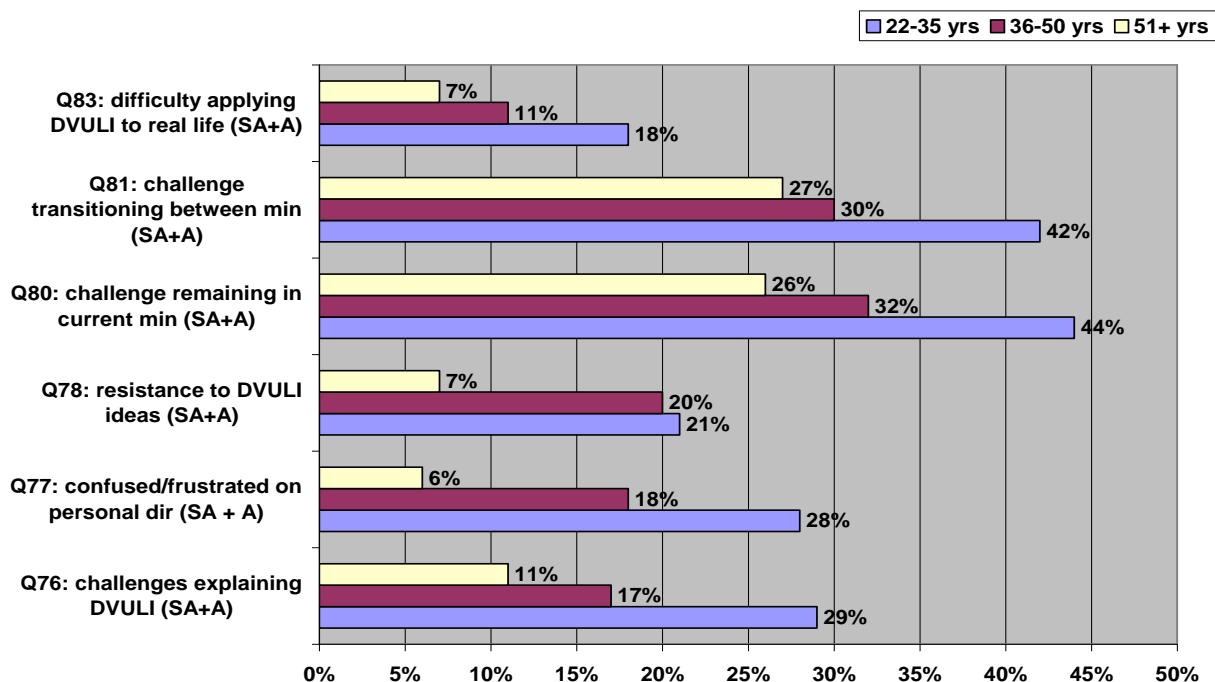
or older aged graduates. In all cases, middle aged graduates believed themselves to experience less challenges than younger graduates but more challenges than older graduates. The question *“I experience resistance to the DVULI ideas and concepts when trying to share them with ministry and work superiors”* was equally challenging for both middle and younger aged graduates.

These trends may reflect both middle and younger aged graduates’ often subordinate positions within their ministry structures, perhaps causing them to more often bump heads with superiors in both visioning and implementing change within their ministry structures. Alternatively, younger graduates may have less experience and ministerial maturity, resulting in a lower ability to bring new ideas into existing ministry contexts.

Conversely, older graduates who hold more established and often senior ministry positions may find they are less challenged when developing and implementing changes because they have higher status and more senior positions that are less likely to provoke resistance. Or, perhaps older graduates are less likely than younger graduates to believe that change is possible, resulting in less effort to push a new paradigm within their organizations.

TABLE 11.8

Age x Challenges



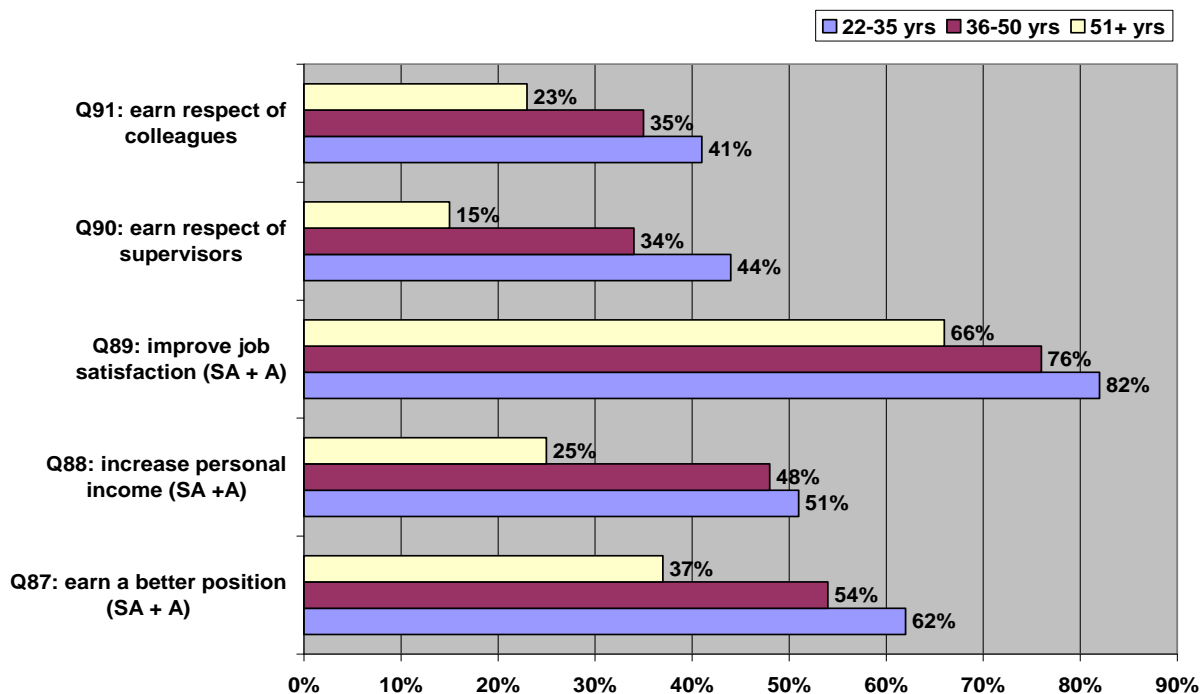
Vocational Impact

Within the section *Vocational Impact*, Table 11.9 shows five questions (out of seven total questions in this section) with at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree or, in three instances, Strongly Agree and Agree response rates added together. In every comparison, the younger graduates believed they were experiencing greater vocational impact than their middle and older aged colleagues. Relative to the other groups, younger graduates felt DVULI training had helped them earn better positions, increase their personal income, improve their job satisfaction, and earn the respect of both supervisors and colleagues. Similar to earlier sections, middle age graduates were between older and younger graduates in terms of these positive impacts.

It would again appear that younger graduates may be experiencing greater benefits from DVULI training because of their relatively junior positions in ministry when compared to middle and older aged graduates. These junior positions often offer greater opportunities for upward vocational growth and may also reflect the ways in which DVULI values and skills are being positively received by colleagues and superiors. In contrast, older graduates may have substantially lower rates of agreement with these questions because they are already in more senior ministry positions, resulting in less opportunity for upward vocational growth and income and fewer supervisors and colleagues whom they may wish to impress.

TABLE 11.9

Age x Vocational Impact



Community Impact

Within the section *Community Impact*, Table 11.10 shows that, while seven categories show very similar outcomes, older graduates were more productive in four areas. First, older graduates not only ministered to more youth before DVULI training, they also ministered to more youth following DVULI training, particularly when compared to younger graduates. While younger graduates estimated that they had, as a result of DVULI training, increased the numbers of youth they ministered to by 50 persons (22%), middle aged graduates increased the estimated numbers of youth served by 92 (39%), and older graduates increased the estimated numbers of youth served by 98 (34%). In addition, middle aged graduates estimated that they trained substantially more individuals (training generally involved DVULI values and skills) than either older or younger graduates. Finally, older graduates brought in substantially more dollars (\$63,770) to their communities in the form of grants and donations than either middle aged graduates (\$39,022) or younger graduates (\$44,095). The rest of the community impact questions showed virtually no differences between the groups.

TABLE 11.10

Community Impact x Age	23 to 35	36 to 50	51 +
Q56: Youth ministered BEFORE DVULI	146	146	196
Q57: Youth ministered AFTER DVULI	186	238	294
Q58: Individuals mentored	8	10	10
Q59: Individuals trained	72	103	89
Q60: Graduates you communicate with per month	3	3	4
Q61: Community projects with graduates in your city	2	3	3
Q62: Organizations you partnered with	10	8	8
Q63: Projects joined with other organizations	4	4	4
Q64: Projects or programs you developed	3	3	3
Q65: Grants you helped bring into your organization	2	2	3
Q66: Dollars raised in grants or donations	44,095	39,022	63,770

Older graduates may be showing the greatest impacts in these areas because of their senior status within their ministries and communities. Because they often have more established ministries and have developed larger community networks over the years, they may be able to minister to more youth and raise more money, particularly after undergoing DVULI training in leverage, resource networking, and collaboration.

Summary

The most consistent findings in this section relate to younger graduates who were generally more likely than middle and older aged graduates to strongly agree that DVULI training had helped them improve personally, practice breakthrough skills regularly, appreciate their breakthrough plan, become more active in their community, develop a vision and mission for themselves and their community, and improve various elements of their vocational lives. On the other hand, they were most likely to struggle with various challenges relating to DVULI training. In contrast, although older graduates were generally least likely to strongly agree across all of these areas, they were more likely to minister to more youth and raise more money in grants or donations. Middle aged graduates generally fit in between the younger and older aged graduates in their responses.

Implications and Recommendations

What accounts for such consistent findings? There are, perhaps, a number of different possible explanations. First, younger graduates may just be more enthusiastic and thus offer stronger support of the program's training. Second, younger graduates would generally be expected to have lower levels of tools and abilities than older graduates, who are more established in their ministries and have more experience in ministry. Third, younger graduates may be more open to new ideas and experiences than middle and older graduates, causing them to practice DVULI skills more regularly and perceive greater value in those skills. Fourth, younger graduates may be more enthusiastic than middle and older graduates about creating change and improving lives in their communities and the world. Finally, younger graduates may be more likely than middle and older graduates to over-estimate their own personal and professional growth than middle and older graduates, causing them to inflate their agreement across a number of categories.

Keeping in mind that all groups show high levels of agreement in virtually all the DVULI Alumni Survey, DVULI staff may wish to consider the relative impact of these findings on younger vs. older graduates. Would greater investment in younger graduates yield a greater return on the DeVos investment since they appear to experience larger improvements across a larger number of areas than older graduates?

On the other hand, ministry-revitalized older graduates appear to demonstrate more mature and productive ministries in terms of numbers of youth served and dollars gathered so perhaps the return on investment in terms of community impact merits maintaining a strong contingent of older ministry partners. In addition, older graduates may provide an important balance of wisdom and seasoning for younger graduates, offering them senior mentors and partners within their communities. Perhaps modifications to the DVULI curriculum to address the differences between these groups might also be worth considering. For example, DVULI trainers could coach younger participants on ways to help colleagues and superiors to understand and incorporate ways of presenting Initiative values and skills in non-threatening, productive ways.

These contrasting pictures of impact must be carefully considered by DVULI staff as they make important decisions about possible recruiting changes to the program. It will also be important for DVULI staff to consider graduates' ages within the context of their number of years in ministry (described in the next section) since some of the findings in similar questions indicate that those in their **middle** ministry years most strongly agree with a number of the questions.

Years in Ministry

As seen in Figure 11.11, close to half (42.7%) of the 272 graduates who completed the DVULI Alumni Survey had been in professional ministry between one and ten years, with 37.4% in ministry between 11-20 years. Not quite one-fifth had been in professional ministry between 21-30 years and less than three percent had been in ministry for more than 30 years. Because of the small number of graduates in this 30+ category, we combined all individuals who had been in ministry for over 20 years for analysis purposes.

FIGURE 11.11

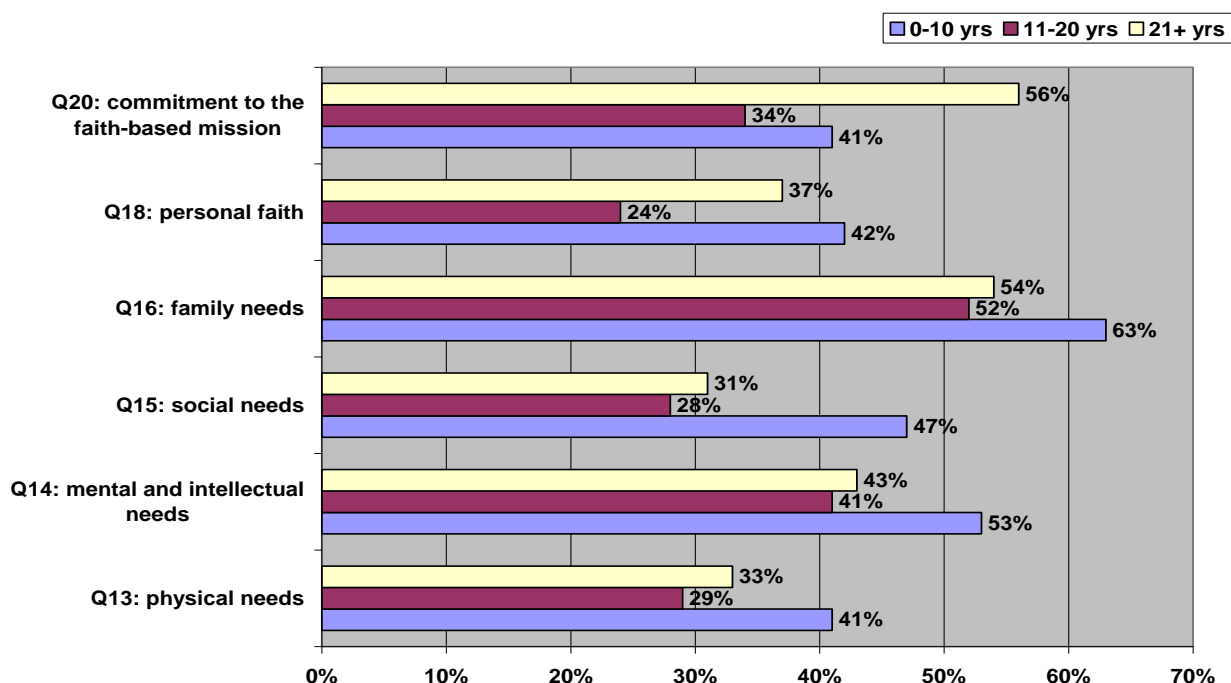
Number of Years	%
0 - 10	42.7
11 - 20	37.4
21 - 30	17.5
31 - 40	2.4
41 - 50	0.4

Personal Improvements

Within the section *Personal Improvements*, Table 11.12 shows the six questions (out of 14 total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. In five of the six questions, the less experienced participants believed they had gained the largest personal improvements in a variety of need areas relating to the value of balance in their lives. Such findings are consistent with earlier findings relating to the age of graduates, although years in ministry showed greater differences across the questions relating to balance.

TABLE 11.12

Yrs in Ministry x Personal Improvements



In contrast, graduates with the most years in ministry more strongly agreed with the sixth question relating to graduates' commitment to the faith-based mission of their organization. This may relate to the ministry revitalization that occurs as more experienced ministry graduates renew and refresh their sometimes discouraged and diminished ministry commitments.

Core Values & Breakthrough Skills

Within the sections *Core Values & Breakthrough Skills*, only one question (out of 12 total questions for these two sections) showed a substantial difference when combining their Daily and Weekly practice response rates (this question does not appear in a Table).

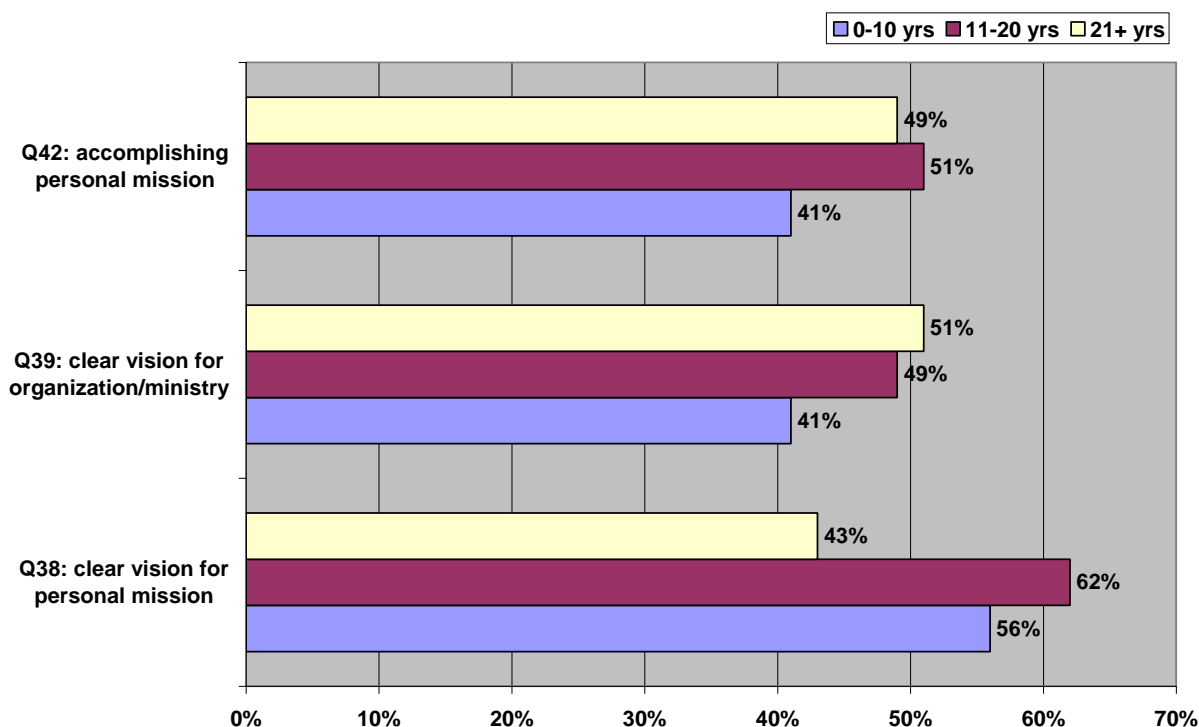
Graduates with the most and middle number of years in ministry were most likely to practice leverage on a daily or weekly basis (70% and 67%, respectively), while 56% of graduates with the least number of years in ministry practiced this skill regularly. This may reflect that graduates with more years of ministry have larger ministry networks to draw on in order to practice leverage. However, given that none of the rest of the skills or values was substantially different, it is likely that no substantial changes need to be made in this portion of the curriculum.

Vision/Mission

Within the section *Vision/Mission*, Table 11.13 shows the three questions (out of eight total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates.

TABLE 11.13

Years of Ministry x Vision/Mission



Graduates in their middle ministry years showed consistently strong agreement across all three questions, particularly in the area of personal mission. However, older ministry graduates were virtually tied with middle ministry graduates in their vision for their organization and ministry and in their belief that they were accomplishing their mission.

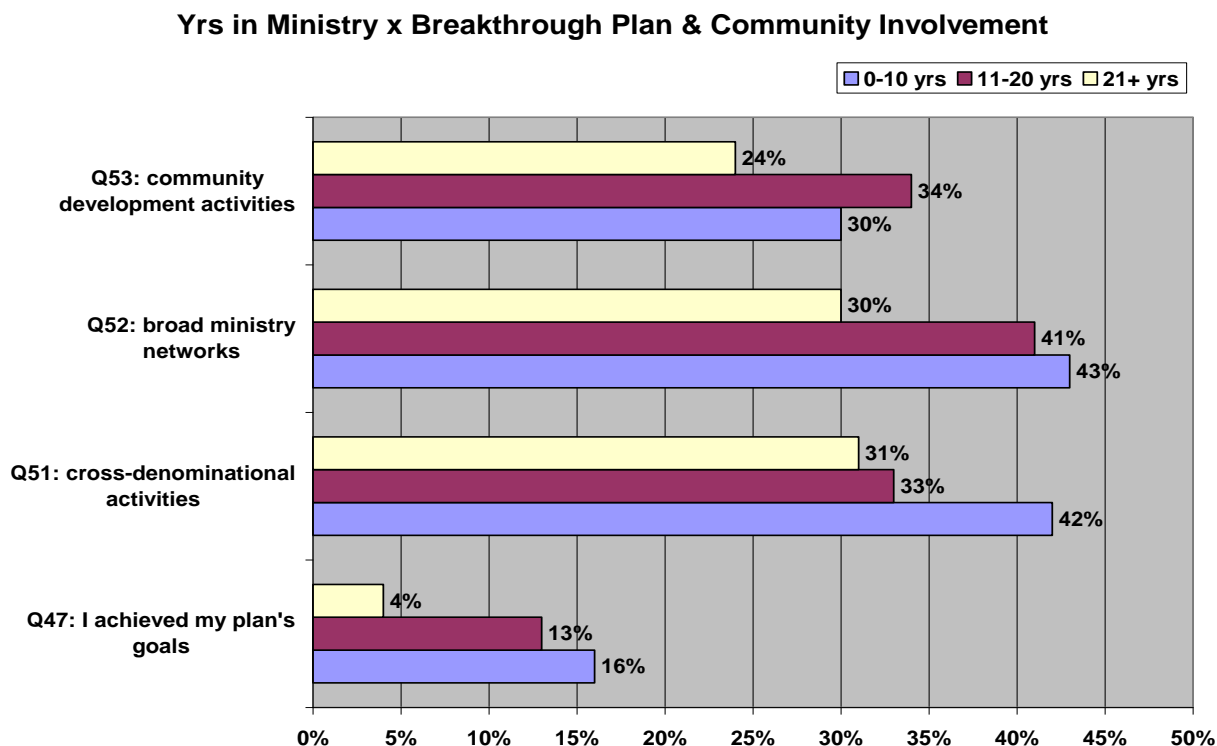
In contrast, graduates in their early ministry years showed the least agreement across all three categories. This pattern is opposite of what we saw in the Age category, where younger graduates were more likely to strongly agree that they had a clear vision and mission on personal, community, and city levels. It is thus possible that, at least in some areas, clarity of one's vision and mission is more greatly influenced by years in ministry than age, with those in the middle ministry years beginning to hit their stride in terms of their mission and vision for

ministry. On the other hand, it is also important to be reminded that the remaining five questions showed no differences between the three groups.

Breakthrough Plan & Community Involvement

Within the sections *Breakthrough Plan* and *Community Involvement*, Table 11.14 shows the four questions (out of nine total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. Consistent with the earlier analysis of the Age category, young ministry graduates showed stronger agreement with three of the four questions.

TABLE 11.14



Young ministry graduates were more likely to say they had completely achieved their Breakthrough Plan goals, although rates were predictably rather low in the Completely category for all graduates (adding the Mostly category increases the totals significantly and essentially evens out the measurements across all three groups). Such differences may reflect greater motivation to enact their ministry plans or may just be showing higher levels of early ministry enthusiasm.

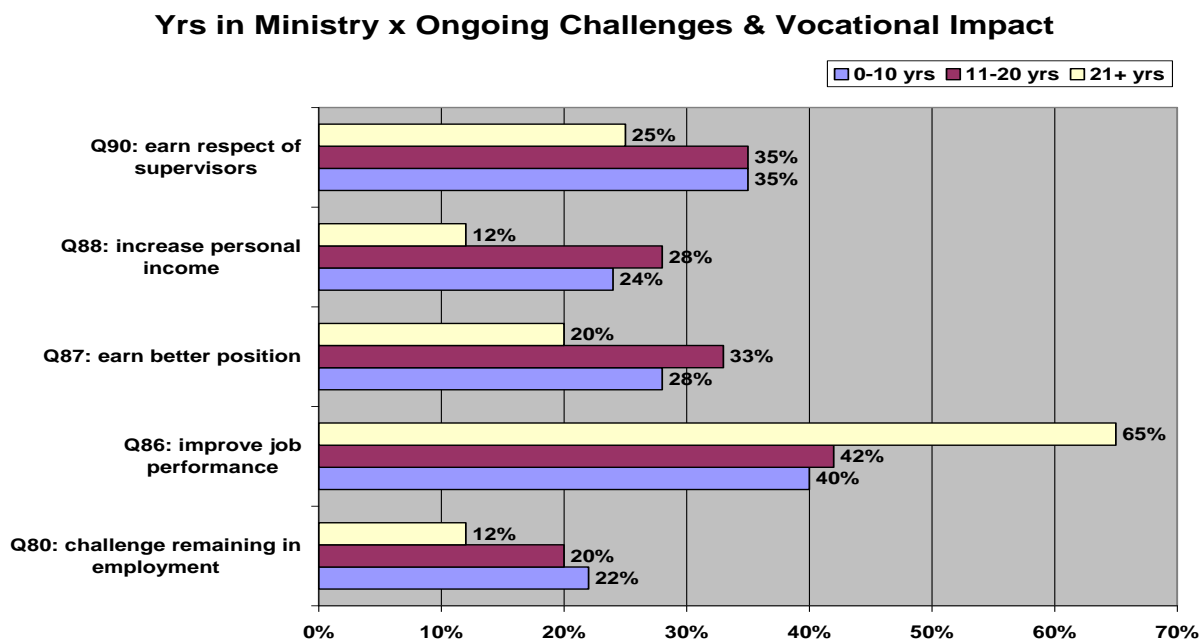
Young ministry graduates were also more likely than both middle and older graduates to strongly agree that DVULI training led them to greater involvement in cross-denominational activities and broad ministry networks (with those in middle ministry years not far behind). Similar to the Age analysis presented earlier, such findings may indicate more openness on the part of early ministry graduates in reaching out to other ministry and community organizations. It may also show a greater willingness to adopt a more inclusive ministry paradigm when dealing with other denominations or community-based organizations. Alternatively, lower rates of agreement on the part of older ministry graduates may reflect that these groups were already more networked across the community, leaving them less need to grow and change in this area than early and middle ministry graduates.

However, graduates in their middle ministry years most strongly agreed that DVULI training had led them to greater involvement in community development activities (with those in middle ministry years not far behind). This may reflect middle ministry graduates' greater network connections within their communities.

Ongoing Challenges & Vocational Impact

Within the sections *Ongoing Challenges* and *Vocational Impact*, Table 11.15 shows the five questions (out of 15 total questions in both sections) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates.

TABLE 11.15



Similar to the earlier Age category discussed earlier, younger ministry graduates experienced the most ongoing challenges remaining in employment, likely reflecting their junior ministry status within their organizations. However, unlike the Age category, only one question emerged as substantially different within the list of eight Challenges questions, leading us to tentatively conclude that the graduates' age is a much greater predictor of ministry challenges than number of years in ministry.

Four of seven questions showed substantial differences in the *Vocational Impact* section, with one question "*DVULI training has helped improve my job performance*" showing 23 – 25% higher rates of agreement among older ministry graduates. This may well reflect the powerful revitalization and retreat from burnout effects that many veteran ministry leaders experience when they complete the Initiative training.

The remaining three questions showed the strongest levels of agreement among the middle ministry graduates (although scores were close to or the same as younger ministry graduates), indicating that perhaps years in ministry is a better predictor of vocational impact than age. Such findings may again suggest that middle ministry graduates are hitting their stride and finding that DVULI training is making a very positive impact on their position, income, and respect from supervisors.

Community Impact

Within the section *Community Impact*, Table 11.16 shows that, while seven categories indicate very similar outcomes, older ministry graduates were consistently more productive in four areas. First, older ministry graduates not only ministered to more youth before DVULI training, they also ministered to more youth following DVULI training, particularly when compared to younger ministry graduates. While younger ministry graduates estimated that they had, as a result of DVULI training, increased the numbers of youth they ministered to by 60 persons (30%), middle ministry graduates increased the estimated numbers of youth served by 84 (36%), and older ministry graduates increased the estimated numbers of youth served by 123 (33%). In addition, older ministry graduates estimated that they trained substantially more individuals (training generally involved DVULI values and skills) than either older or younger ministry graduates. Finally, older ministry graduates brought in substantially more dollars (\$74,714) to their communities in the form of grants and donations than either middle ministry graduates (\$48,248) or younger ministry graduates (\$32,328). The rest of the *Community Impact* questions showed virtually no differences between the groups.

These trends of these findings are similar to those described in the earlier Age section, but number of years in ministry shows more consistent outcomes across all four areas, with the older ministry graduates clearly serving more youth (both before and after DVULI training), training more individuals, and raising more money in grants or donations.

Similar to the earlier Age section, graduates with a greater number of years in ministry may be showing the greatest impacts in these areas because of their senior status within their

ministries and communities. Because they often have more established ministries and have developed larger community networks over the years, they may be able to minister to more youth and raise more money, particularly after undergoing DVULI training in leverage, resource networking, and collaboration.

TABLE 11.16

Community Impact x Years in Ministry	1 to 10	11 to 20	21 +
Q56: Youth ministered BEFORE DVULI	138	147	255
Q57: Youth ministered AFTER DVULI	198	231	378
Q58: Individuals mentored	8	10	11
Q59: Individuals trained	87	85	132
Q60: Graduates you communicate with per month	3	3	4
Q61: Community projects with graduates in your city	3	3	3
Q62: Organizations you partnered with	9	8	10
Q63: Projects joined with other organizations	4	4	5
Q64: Projects or programs you developed	3	3	3
Q65: Grants you helped bring into your organization	2	2	2
Q66: Dollars raised in grants or donations	32,328	48,248	74,714

Summary

Consistent with the Age section above, graduates in their early ministry years most strongly agreed that DVULI training had helped them improve on a personal level. Interestingly, young ministry graduates identified even *more* areas where they benefited than young age graduates. In addition, young ministry graduates were more likely to believe they were accomplishing their breakthrough plan goals and were more involved in cross-denominational activities and broad ministry networks than either middle or older ministry graduates. They were also more likely to express ongoing challenges in remaining in their current employment. Graduates showed virtually no substantial differences in either core values or breakthrough skills.

In contrast to the Age section, however, middle and older ministry graduates showed a stronger sense of mission and vision than younger ministry graduates. Middle ministry graduates were most likely to believe they received a positive vocational impact from their Initiative training, although older ministry graduates were substantially more likely to believe that DVULI training had improved their job performance.

Also consistent with the Age section, older ministry graduates not only ministered to more youth before DVULI training, they also ministered to more youth following DVULI training, particularly when compared to younger ministry graduates. These findings were even stronger than those in the Age section.

Implications and Recommendations

While the findings in this section confirm many of the results in the Age section, there are also some important differences. In both sections, graduates who were younger in both age and ministry experience appear to have gained the most in the areas of personal improvement, breakthrough plan accomplishment, and involvement in cross-denominational networks. Readers can refer back to the previous Age section to review various explanations for why this might be the case. **However, in most sections there were a lower number of differences than were found in the Age section. There were also more instances where *middle-ministry graduates showed stronger agreement than young ministry graduates*.** One possible explanation for these differences is that age may matter more than number of years in ministry in determining graduates' perceptions of DVULI training success. Said differently, younger graduates may feel a stronger need for such leadership training, particularly at the early, formational stages of their careers. Compared with younger *ministry* graduates, those who are younger in *age* also appear to struggle more with job-related challenges, perhaps due to their more junior age and position within their ministry organizations.

Once again keeping in mind that all groups show high levels of agreement in virtually all DVULI Alumni Survey questions, DVULI staff may wish to consider the relative impact of these findings on younger vs. older ministry graduates. Since physical age appears to matter more than number of years in ministry for many of these categories, DVULI staff have even stronger reasons to believe that greater investment in younger aged graduates will yield a greater return on the DeVos investment since they appear to experience larger improvements across a larger number of areas than older graduates. Any modifications in the Initiative's curriculum would more appropriately need to make changes based on age rather than number of years in ministry.

The results also suggest that middle ministry graduates are beginning to hit their stride and are showing greater benefits across a number of categories in this analysis. DVULI training appears particularly important in reinvigorating their ministry mission and vocational impact. Such strong findings confirm the effectiveness of the DVULI curriculum in revitalizing middle ministry graduates, thereby lengthening their ministry careers by reducing burnout and increasing ministry effectiveness.

Keeping in mind that older ministry graduates showed even larger numbers of youth served, individuals trained, and dollars gathered when compared to those in the Age section, modifications to the DVULI curriculum may wish to address the differences between these groups as well by encouraging more older ministry graduates to mentor younger ministry graduates. For example, they could help introduce younger ministry graduates to their community networks and coach younger participants on ways to help colleagues and superiors to understand and incorporate DVULI values and skills into their ministries.

Year of Graduation

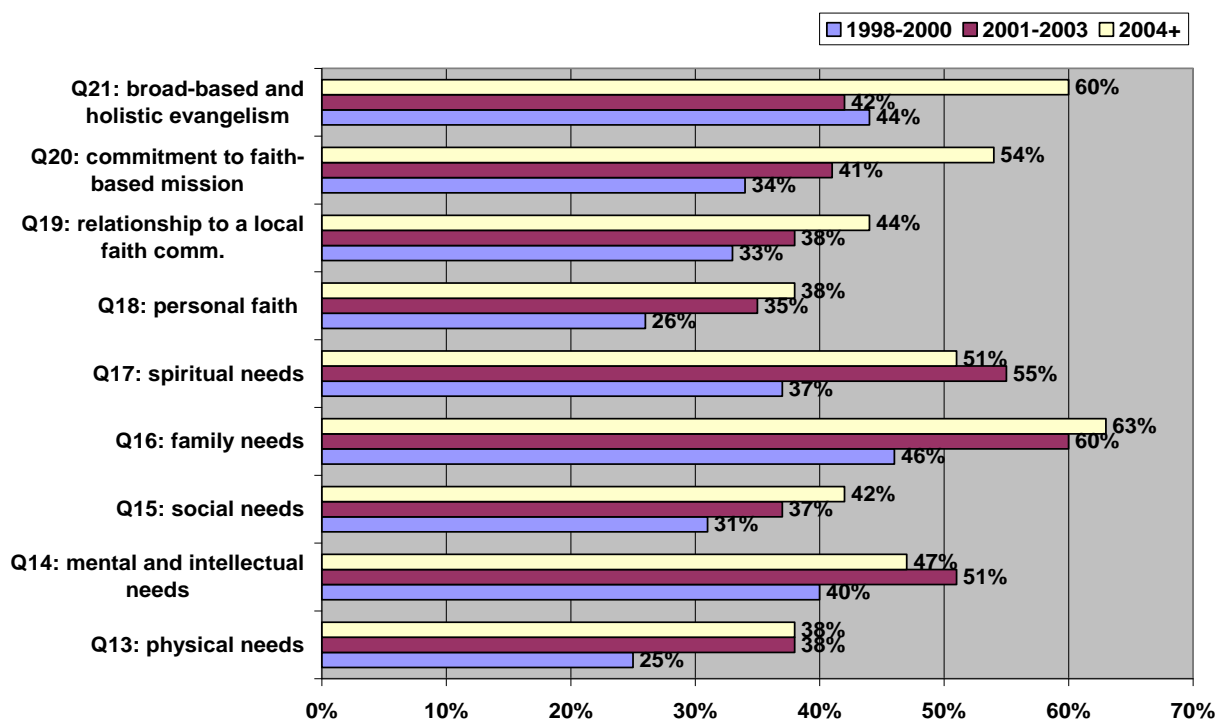
The 271 graduates were divided into three groups to analyze the possible differences between early, middle, and later graduation cohorts. A total of 81 survey respondents (30%) graduated between years 1998 – 2000, while 109 respondents (40%) graduated between years 2001 – 2003; and, 81 respondents (30%) graduated between years 2004 – 2005.

Personal Improvements

Within the section *Personal Improvements*, Table 11.17 shows the nine questions (out of 14 total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. In seven of the nine questions, the later graduation cohort (years 2004 – 2005) believed they had made the largest personal improvements in a wide variety of need areas in their lives. In all but two questions, the middle graduation cohort scored between the early and later cohorts.

TABLE 11.17

Year of Graduation x Personal Improvement



The difference between the early vs. middle and later cohort groups was most pronounced, with the early cohort consistently believing they had made lower levels of personal

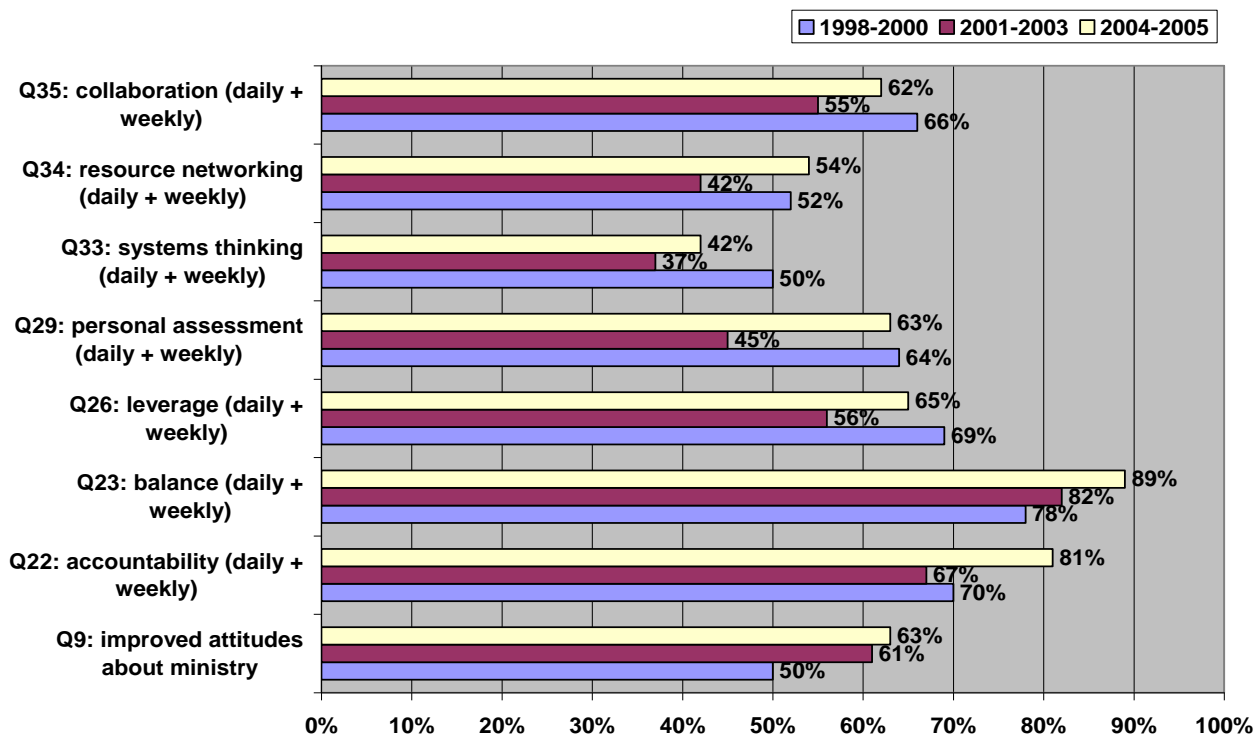
improvements than the other two groups. These findings likely relate to the curriculum revisions that have steadily improved the quality and focus of the DVULI training.

Core Values & Breakthrough Skills

Within the sections *Core Values & Breakthrough Skills*, Table 11.18 shows seven questions (out of 12 total questions for these two sections) with a substantial difference when combining Daily and Weekly practice response rates. In contrast to most of the other categories, the early graduation cohort were generally most likely to practice the core values of collaboration and systems thinking on a daily or weekly basis, as well as the breakthrough skills of personal assessment and leverage on a daily or weekly basis. Somewhat surprisingly, graduates in the middle cohort (years 2002 - 2004) were substantially less likely to practice six of the seven values or skills than the other two cohorts. Finally, graduates in the later cohort were most likely to practice balance in their ministries as well as believe that DVULI training had improved their attitudes toward ministry.

TABLE 11.18

Year of Graduation x Core Values & Breakthrough Skills



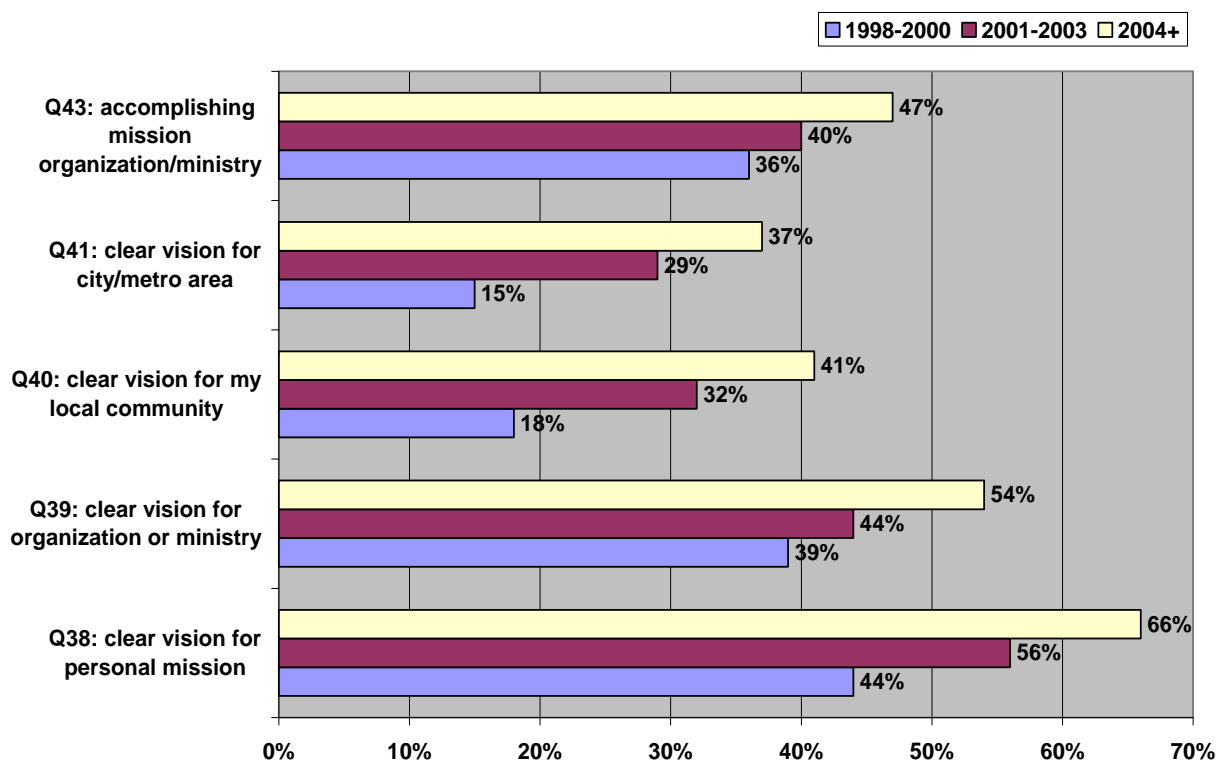
These findings are interesting because, although the early cohort was generally least likely to believe that DVULI training had created personal improvements, they were most likely to say they were regularly practicing the core values and breakthrough skills in their lives. And, although the middle cohort was more likely than the early cohort to believe that DVULI training had produced a wide range of personal improvements, they were, relative to the other two groups, the least likely to actually practice many of the values and skills on a regular basis. One very cautious explanation is that the early cohort felt the greatest need to practice these values and skills on a regular basis because they felt the least confident in their mastery. One additional positive effect is that the active practice of these values and skills does not appear to be deteriorating over time.

Vision/Mission

Within the section *Vision/Mission*, Table 11.19 shows the five questions (out of eight total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates.

TABLE 11.19

Year of Graduation x Vision/Mission



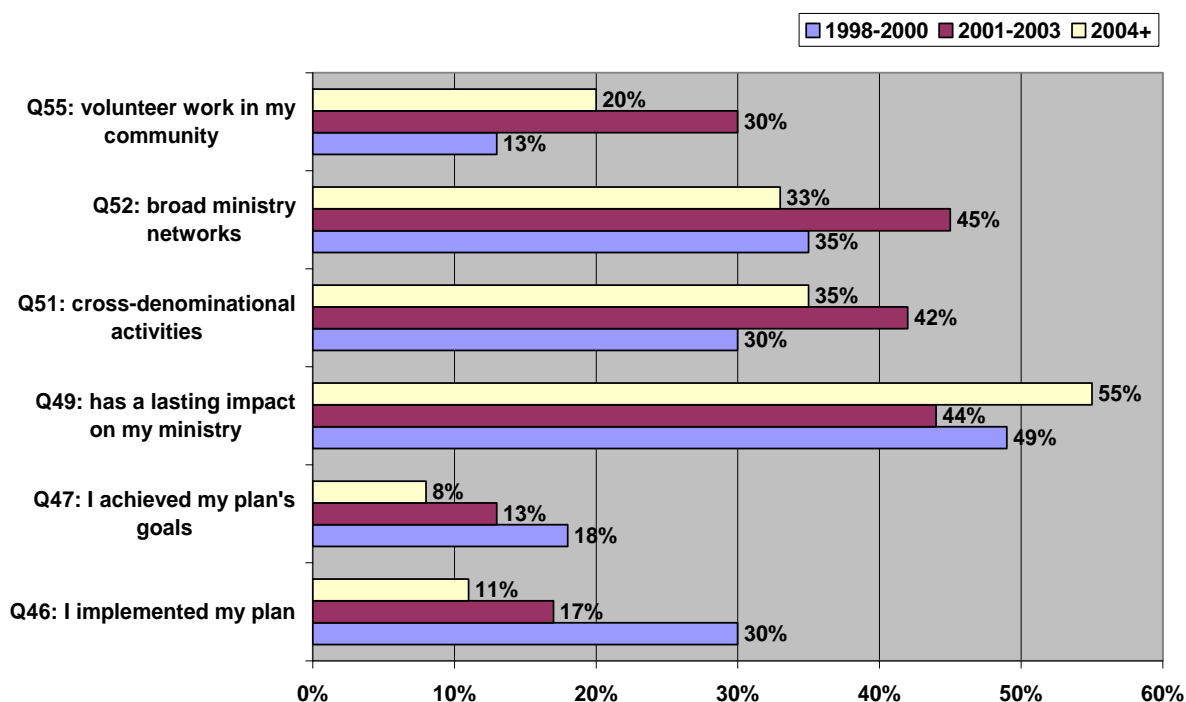
All five questions show a clear pattern, with graduates in the later cohort believing they had a consistently clear vision and mission across all ministry areas as well as the strongest belief that they were accomplishing their mission for their organization or ministry. In contrast, graduates in the early cohort were least likely to believe they had a clear vision and mission or were accomplishing their mission for their ministry. Again, such findings may indicate that, over the years, DVULI training was gradually improving in both quality and focus.

Breakthrough Plan & Community Involvement

Within the two sections *Breakthrough Plan* and *Community Involvement*, Table 11.20 shows the six questions (out of nine total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. Graduates in the later cohort were most likely to believe that their Breakthrough Plan had had a lasting impact on their ministries. However, as would be expected, the early cohort most strongly believed they had more completely implemented and achieved their breakthrough plan's goals. The most obvious explanation of this belief is that the early cohort has had the most time since their graduation to implement their Breakthrough Plan.

TABLE 11.20

Yr of Graduation x Breakthrough Plan & Community Involvement



However, in the remaining *Community Involvement* questions, the middle cohort showed strongest agreement across all questions relating to DVULI training impact on involvement in cross-denominational activities, broad ministry networks, and volunteer work within their community. One very cautious explanation is that, during the middle years, DVULI trainers perhaps focused more heavily on community involvement principles, thereby inspiring graduates to greater levels of involvement in these areas.

Ongoing Challenges

None of the eight questions listed as ongoing challenges showed any substantial differences across the three cohort groups.

Vocational Impact

Only one question (out of a possible seven questions in this category) showed substantial differences between cohorts (no table was created for these questions). While only 29% of the early graduation cohort Strongly Agreed that “*DVULI training has helped me stay involved in ministry*”, 45% of both the middle and later graduation cohorts Strongly Agreed with this question. Similarly, in response to a somewhat similar question later in the survey which asked “*Have you remained in youth ministry since completing DVULI training?*”, only 60% of the early cohort graduates said ‘Yes’, while 65% of the middle cohort and 79% of the later cohort said ‘Yes’.

The difference in the first question might be occurring because, relative to the other two groups, more time had passed since the early cohort graduations and the DVULI-based motivation for ministry involvement had deteriorated over time. One positive aspect of this question is that the middle cohort responded at the same level as the later cohort, thus showing no deterioration in effect on the middle cohort’s part.

Differences in the second question are also probably best explained by the amount of time since graduation. It would be expected that as more time passed following graduation, more and more graduates would leave youth ministry to pursue other ministries or interests. One other possible explanation that is consistent with most other findings in this section is that the middle and later cohorts experienced a steadily improving DVULI training curriculum over time, resulting in stronger agreement on questions across multiple questions.

Community Impact

Table 11.21 shows that, compared to the middle and latest graduation cohort, the early cohort estimated they had ministered to a substantially higher number of youth both prior to and following DVULI training. All three cohorts substantially increased the number of youth

they ministered to following DVULI training, with the early graduation cohort increasing by 38%, the middle cohort increasing by 30%, and the latest graduation cohort increasing by 28%. The early cohort also estimated that they trained and mentored more individuals, partnered with more organizations, developed more projects or programs, brought in more grants, and raised more money than the middle and later cohorts.

Most of these differences can probably be best explained by the amount of time that has passed since graduating from the Initiative. We would expect that graduates with more post-DVULI ministry time would have developed more mature and fruitful ministries, thereby allowing them develop their ministry relationships and partner with other ministries or funders more effectively.

TABLE 11.21

Community Impact x Year of Graduation	1998-00	2001-03	2004-05
Q56: Youth ministered BEFORE DVULI	200	148	133
Q57: Youth ministered AFTER DVULI	324	212	186
Q58: Individuals mentored	12	10	6
Q59: Individuals trained	167	79	38
Q60: Graduates you communicate with per month	2	3	4
Q61: Community projects with graduates in your city	2	3	3
Q62: Organizations you partnered with	10	9	7
Q63: Projects joined with other organizations	5	5	3
Q64: Projects or programs you developed	4	3	2
Q65: Grants you helped bring into your organization	3	2	1
Q66: Dollars raised in grants or donations	57025	55241	13822

Summary

A review of all categories shows that, relative to the other two groups, the later graduation cohort (years 2004 – 2005) were most likely to strongly believe that they had made the greatest number of personal improvements, had the clearest vision and mission for their ministries and were accomplishing their mission. They also felt their Breakthrough Plans had the most lasting

impact, believed that the Initiative had helped them remain in ministry, and were most likely to have remained in youth ministry. On the other hand, this cohort also showed the lowest levels of community impact in almost all categories.

The middle graduation cohort (years 2001 – 2003) was generally in between the early and later graduation cohorts, but most strongly believed themselves to be involved in the community and equally likely (along with the later cohort) to believe that DVULI had helped them remain in ministry.

Finally, the earliest graduation cohort (years 1998 – 2000) were least likely to strongly believe that they had made personal improvements as well as least likely to believe they had a clear vision and mission for their ministries or had accomplished their mission. Additionally, they were least likely to have remained in youth ministry. On the other hand, compared with the other two cohorts, early graduates were the most likely to practice their values and skills on a regular basis and showed the highest levels of community impact in almost all areas.

Implications and Recommendations

The later graduation cohort generally showed the strongest agreement across the greatest number of areas, while the earliest cohort generally showed the lowest levels of strong agreement across the greatest number of areas, perhaps indicating that the curriculum has gradually been strengthened over the time that the Initiative has been offered, leading middle and later graduation cohorts to more strongly affirm the impact of the Initiative on their lives.

The higher levels of practice in values and skills, as described by the earliest cohort, appear to correlate nicely with the highest levels of community impact. Both findings are probably best explained by the longer number of years in the ministry. Such findings also clearly establish the enduring value of DVULI training over time in that those who are the furthest from the training continue to actively use the values and skills and demonstrate elevated levels of ministry impact within their communities. It is also encouraging to see that there are no differences in ongoing ministry challenges between the three groups.

As a reminder, it is important to remember that there were many questions that did not show any, or very few, significant differences between groups. As such, the reader is again cautioned against making too much of the differences that do occur since many of the questions show few differences at all. In addition, it is important to remember that the differences that do exist should be seen as a sign of the strength of support for a particular question (the difference between someone who merely agrees vs. someone who strongly agrees), rather than as strong differences in agreement vs. disagreement between the groups.

Since all trends seem to be heading in positive directions, no recommended changes are being made for this section.

Hours per Week in Ministry

Graduates were asked to estimate the average weekly hours they worked in the last year in youth ministry (paid and volunteer), other ministry (paid and volunteer), and other work (paid and volunteer). Because respondents could select the number of hours worked each week across all categories, the total number of ministry hours was combined together for the purposes of this analysis. The 'other work' categories were excluded from this analysis.

The 260 graduates who answered this question were divided into four groups to analyze the possible differences between graduates who worked different levels of volunteer or paid hours in any form of ministry each week. The first group, which we call 'Low-Time', worked between zero and 11 hours per week and accounted for 20% of the graduates (about one-fifth of this Low-Time group (20 respondents) said that they were averaging *zero* hours per week in ministry). The second group, called 'Part-Time', worked between 11 and 30 hours per week and accounted for 22% of the graduates. The third group, labeled 'Full-Time', worked between 31 and 50 hours per week and accounted for 33% of the graduates. Finally, the fourth group, which we called 'Overtime', averaged over 51 hours per week and accounted for 25% of the graduates.

Personal Improvements

Within the section *Personal Improvements*, Table 11.22 shows the eleven questions (out of 14 total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. This table shows a complex picture in which none of the groups dominates across all areas. However, some interesting patterns are present. In *Personal Improvements* questions most strongly relating to issues of balance, the Low-Time group most strongly agreed that DVULI training had helped them improve their physical, mental and intellectual, social, and spiritual needs. Such findings may indicate that Low-Timers, who are often trying to manage multiple commitments and shoehorn their ministry commitments in among all their other priorities, were able to utilize the teachings on balance to help them more effectively juggle their commitments and priorities.

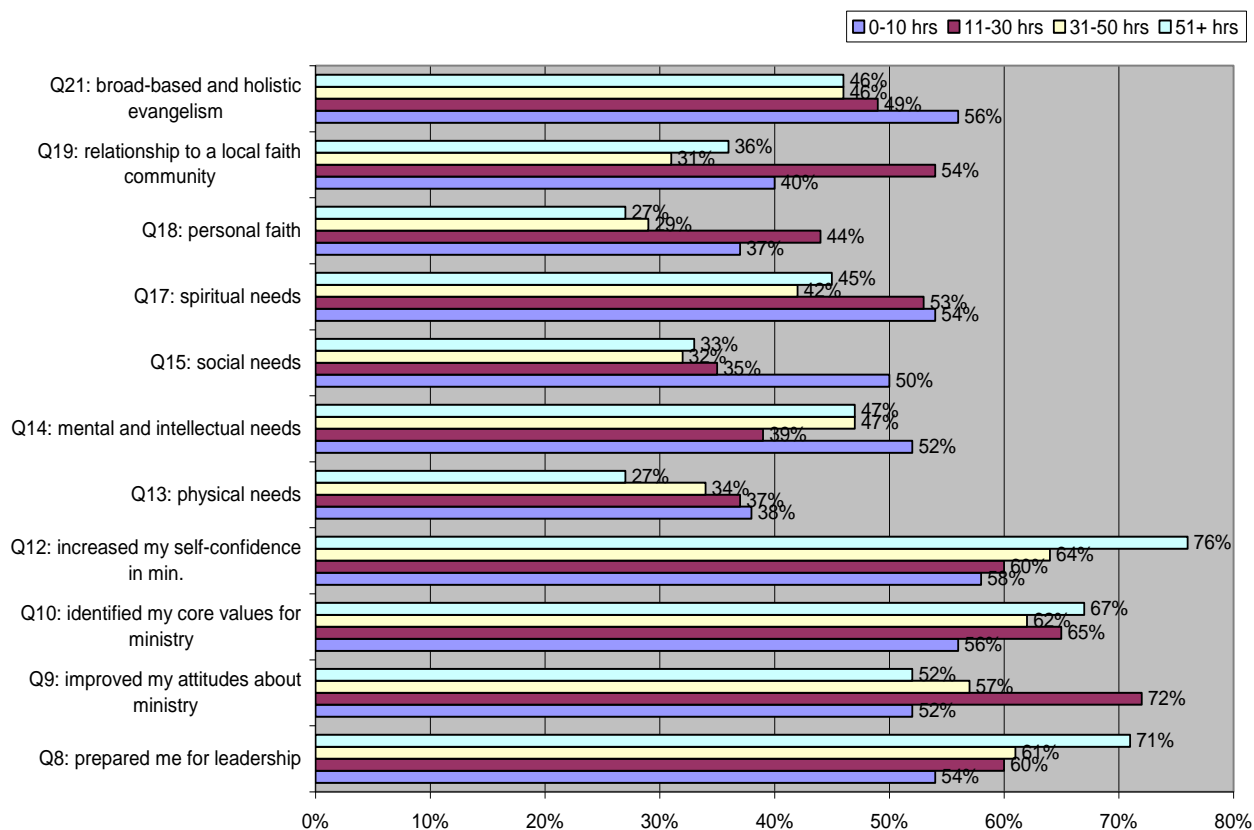
The Part-Time group most strongly agreed that DVULI training helped them improve their attitudes toward ministry, increased their personal faith, and helped them improve their relationship to a local faith community. The Part-Time group also strongly agreed with a number of other questions, often coming in as the second-highest group within many of the questions. Such findings may mean that this group received the greatest all-around benefit from the DVULI training, which is encouraging since this group, similar to the Low-Time group, is often attempting to juggle many priorities and commitments. Strong agreement across multiple areas shows that the benefits of the Initiative are being powerfully felt by those who have important needs in these areas.

The Full-Time group did not lead in any of the questions in this section, but strongly agreed at high levels to many of the questions. Such findings may show that DVULI training is

benefiting those who are heavily involved in the day-in, day-out responsibilities of full-time ministry.

TABLE 11.22

Weekly Hours of Ministry x Personal Improvement



The Overtime group most strongly agreed that DVULI training had prepared them for leadership, helped them identify their core values for ministry, and increased their self-confidence in ministry. Somewhat surprisingly, such findings may show that, prior to the Initiative, this hard-working group felt less prepared for, and less self-confident in their ministry leadership abilities. Relative to the other three groups, DVULI training appears to have provided them with a boost in these areas. Finally, due to their overtime work habits, this group, unfortunately but not surprisingly, showed the weakest agreement in questions relating to balance.

Core Values

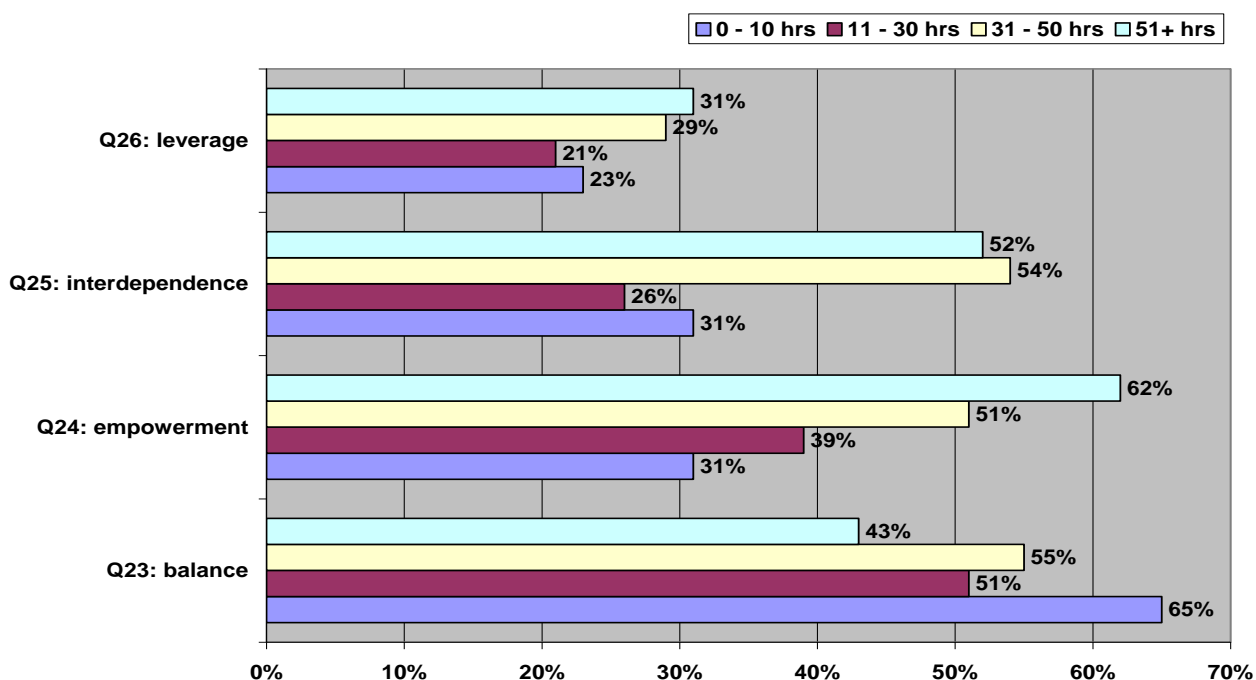
Within the section *Core Values*, Table 11.23 shows four questions (out of five total questions for this section) with a substantial difference in respondents' daily practice of the DVULI core values. While the Low-Time group was most likely to practice Balance on a daily basis, they were either third- or four-likeliest to practice the rest of the core values on a daily basis. Consistent with the Balance questions in the section above, it may be that Low-Timers with multiple commitments and priorities were best able to utilize the teachings on balance to help them more effectively juggle their ministry, employment, and personal lives. They were perhaps less likely to practice the other values as regularly because those involve activities most likely to connect to ministry activities, in which their involvement is less likely than the other three groups.

The Part-Time group ranked at or near the bottom in their practice of the four core values. Such findings may indicate that, at part-time status, they really don't have as much time or commitment to practice the core values as the Full-Time and Overtime groups.

In contrast, graduates in the Full-Time group ranked at or near the top of the groups in their practice of the four core values. These consistent findings may indicate that this group is fully engaged in their ministry and are regularly applying the core values to their work.

TABLE 11.23

Hours per Week x Core Values



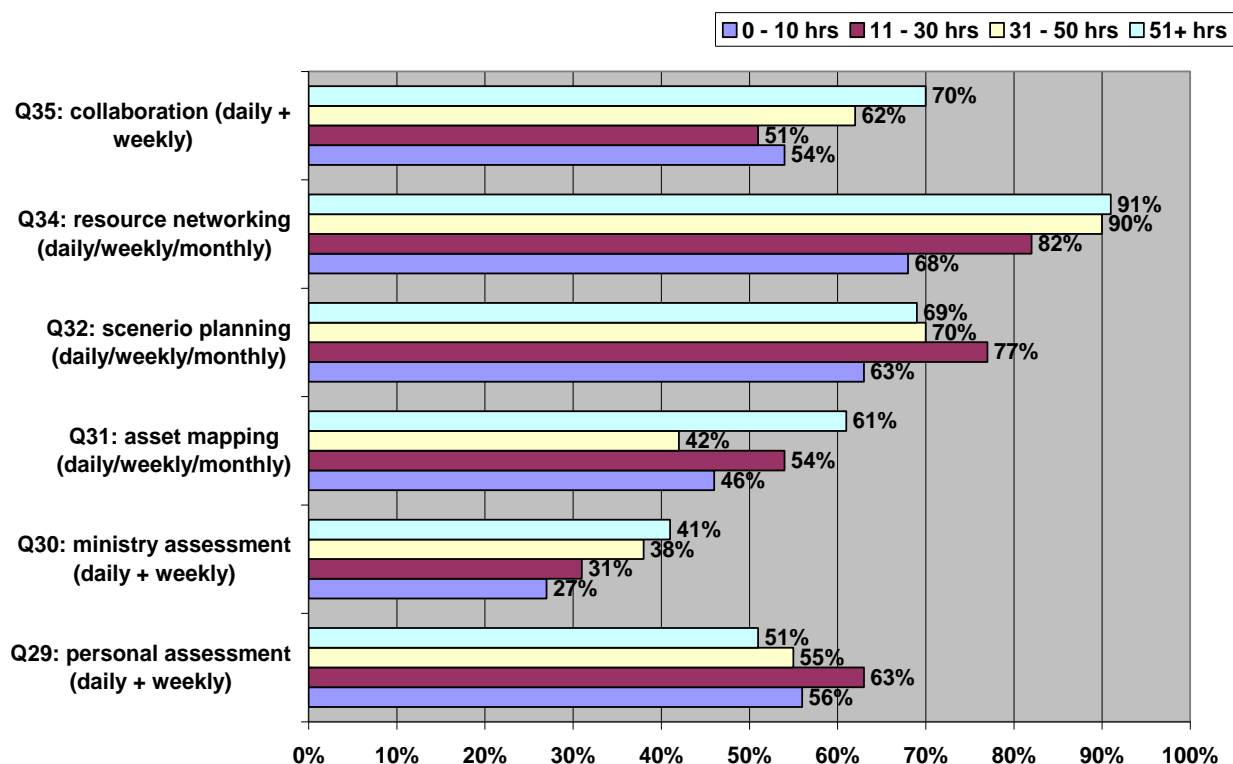
Finally, the graduates in the Overtime group were most likely to practice both Empowerment and Leverage on a daily basis, and were a close second to the Full-Time group in practicing Interdependence on a daily basis. Such findings are similar to the Full-Time group, perhaps indicating that this group is also fully engaged in their ministry and are regularly applying the core values to their work. In contrast, Overtimers were least likely to practice Balance in their daily lives, perhaps due to their seeming inability to effectively manage their overtime work habits.

Breakthrough Skills

Within the section *Breakthrough Skills*, Table 11.24 shows six questions (out of seven total questions for this section) with a substantial difference in respondents' daily practice of the DVULI breakthrough skills. It is important to note that this section combined Daily, Weekly, and sometimes Monthly practice of these skills together since some of the skills aren't generally practiced on a daily or even weekly basis.

TABLE 11.24

Hours per Week x Breakthrough Skills



While there are some variations across the questions when comparing the four groups, the basic trends show that graduates in the Full-Time and Overtime groups were generally more likely to regularly use their breakthrough skills than the Low-Time and Part-Time groups. However, the Part-Time group did practice personal assessment and scenario planning more frequently than the other three groups.

These findings generally lend support to the idea that the more hours per week a person serves in ministry, the more likely they are to practice the breakthrough skills. Such suggestions certainly make intuitive sense, but they don't explain why the Part-Time group practiced personal assessment and scenario planning more regularly than the other groups.

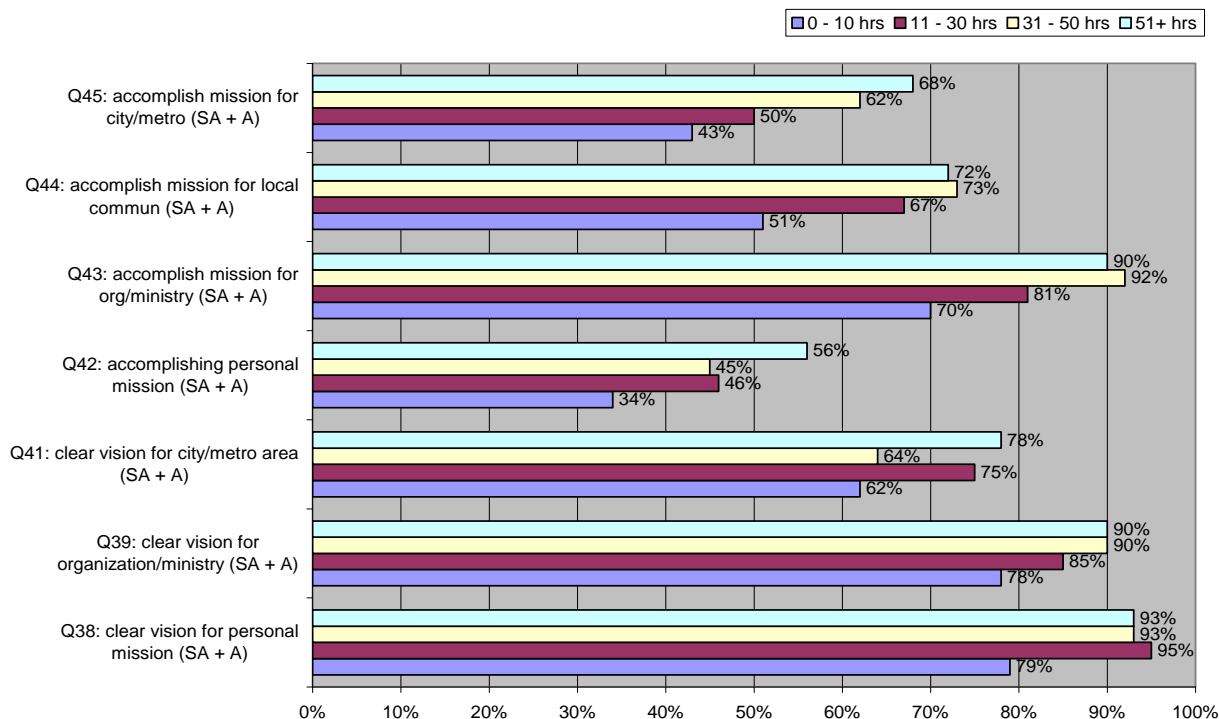
Vision/Mission

Within the section *Vision/Mission*, Table 11.25 shows seven questions (out of eight total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their combined

Strongly Agree and Agree response rates (these responses were combined to further accentuate the differences between the four groups).

TABLE 11.25

Hours per Week x Vision/Mission



Once again, Full-Time and Overtime groups generally showed the strongest agreement to questions relating to a clear vision for their personal, organization/ministry, and city/metro areas as well as showing greater likelihood of believing they were accomplishing their mission in these areas. In contrast, graduates in the Low-Time group were, in every case, least likely to believe they had a clear vision or were accomplishing their mission from a personal to city/metro level. While graduates in the Part-Time group were generally likely to show agreement below the rates for the Overtime and Full-Time groups, they were most likely to believe they had a clear vision for their personal mission and second mostly likely to believe the same for their city or metro area.

Once again, these findings would appear to lend support to the idea that the more hours per week a person serves in ministry, the more likely they are to have a clear vision and mission and to accomplish it on personal, organizational, local community, and city levels. However, once again, graduates in the Part-Time group ranked highly in areas that resist easy explanations.

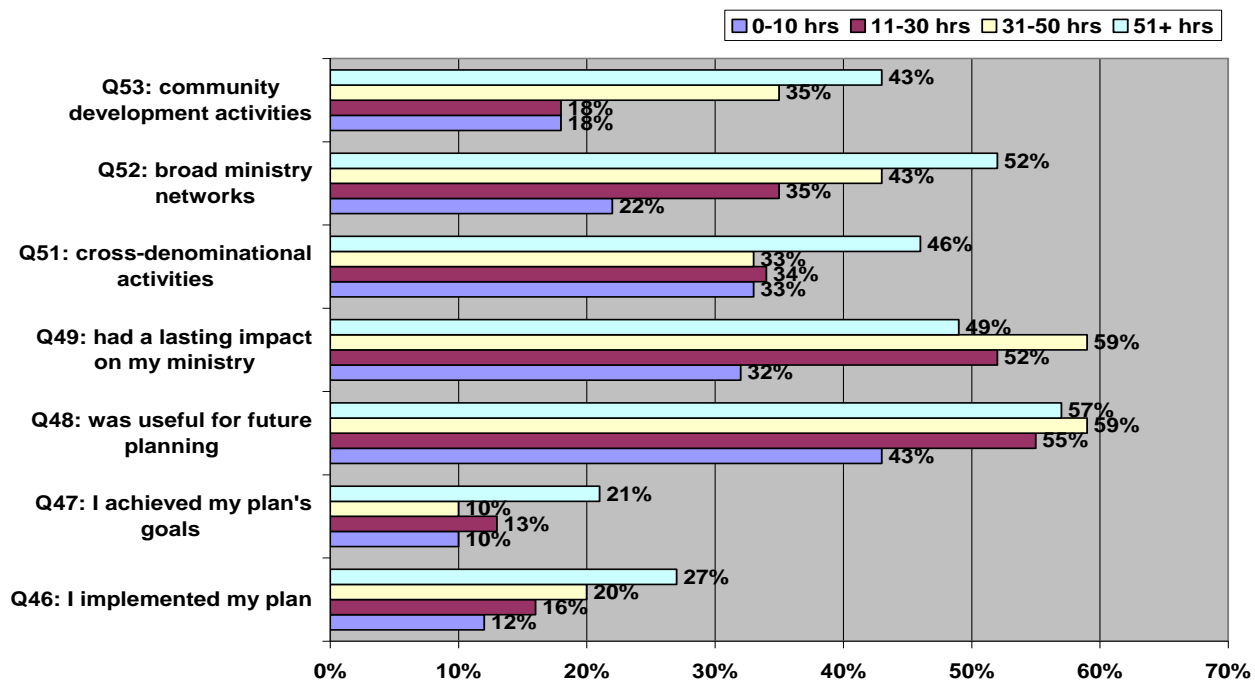
Breakthrough Plan and Community Involvement

Within the sections *Breakthrough Plan* and *Community Involvement*, Table 11.26 shows the seven questions (out of nine total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. Findings again illustrate that Full-Time and Overtime groups almost always showed the strongest agreement to most questions. It should be noted, however, that the Part-Time group was often close to, and in one case surpassed the agreement rates of the Full-Time group.

Again, more ministry hours would appear to be strongly associated with implementation and achievement of the Breakthrough Plan and higher perceived rates of community involvement. Such findings would make intuitive sense since more hours spent in ministry would likely help graduates to achieve their plans and show greater community involvement.

TABLE 11.26

Hours per Week x Breakthrough Plan & Involvement



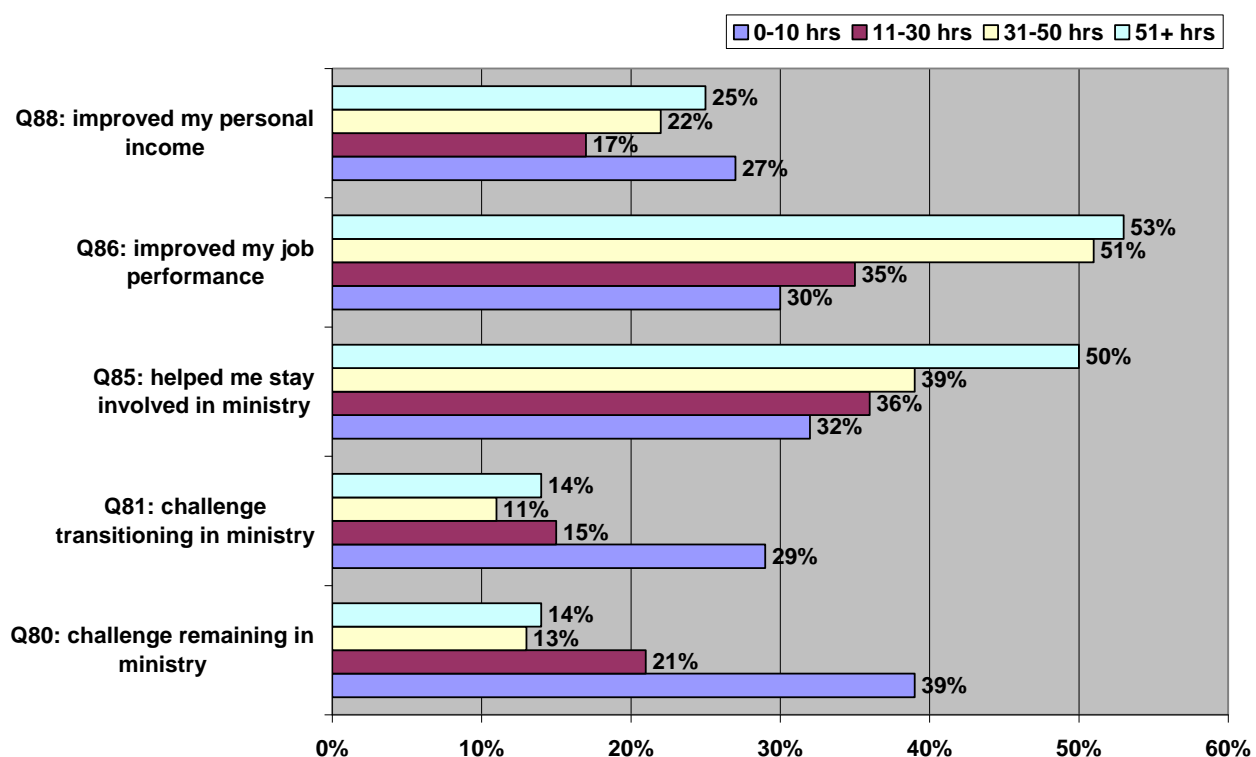
Ongoing Challenges & Vocational Impact

Within the sections *Ongoing Challenges* and *Vocational Impact*, Table 11.27 shows the five questions (out of 15 total questions in both sections) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. As might be expected, graduates in the Low-

Time group agreed most strongly that they were substantially more challenged to both remain and make transitions in their ministries. Conversely, this same group was also least likely to say that DVULI training had helped them to stay involved in ministry or improve their job performance (although, somewhat surprisingly, they were most likely to say that the Initiative had helped them improve their personal income!). Such general findings are not surprising given that this group is involved in some form of ministry for ten or less hours each week, making it more difficult for them to maintain ongoing ministry involvement. However, it is also very important to once again note what is missing: the differences between groups were greater than 10% in only two of the eight Ongoing Challenges questions. This means that in 80% of the questions in this area, the Low-Time group did NOT experience substantial differences between the other groups. Such findings may mean that, while graduates in the Low-Time group experience some challenges relating to their jobs, they are not experiencing any greater difficulties than the other groups in applying DVULI principles in their lives or with their colleagues and superiors.

TABLE 11.27

Hours per Week x Challenges & Vocational Impact



On the other hand, Full-Time and Overtime groups were least likely to say they were challenged to remain in, or transition between, ministries. Conversely, these two groups were most likely to believe that DVULI training helped them stay involved in ministry and improved

their job performance. Again, these groups appear to be receiving the most benefits and least challenges from full-time or overtime ministry involvement.

Community Involvement

Table 11.28 shows that all four groups substantially increased the number of youth they ministered to following DVULI training, with the Low-Time group increasing by 26%, the Part-Time group increasing by 36%, the Full-Time group increasing by 33%, and the Overtime group increasing by 33%. On this basis, it would appear that each group was quite successful in translating their DVULI training into greater levels of involvement within their communities.

As one would expect with their low weekly involvement in ministry, the Low-Time group performed at lower levels than the Full-Time and Overtime groups, reaching roughly half the number of youth, and mentoring and training about half the level of individuals in their ministries. While they ministered to more youth than the Part-Time group prior to the Initiative, they pulled even with that group following DVULI training. Compared to the other groups, they also raised only one-fourth to one-half of the dollars in grants or donations. That said, there were only small or no differences between groups in a number of categories. Given the number of hours per week of ministry involvement, it is remarkable that this group was as involved and productive as they were, particularly with all the other work commitments they are undoubtedly carrying.

TABLE 11.28

Community Impact x Hours per Week	0 to 10	11 to 30	31 to 50	50 +
Q56: Youth ministered BEFORE DVULI	115	102	199	172
Q57: Youth ministered AFTER DVULI	155	159	301	256
Q58: Individuals mentored	5	9	11	10
Q59: Individuals trained	58	89	110	102
Q60: Graduates you communicate with per month	2	3	3	3
Q61: Community projects with graduates in your city	2	3	3	3
Q62: Organizations you partnered with	8	6	9	9

Q63: Projects joined with other organizations	3	4	5	5
Q64: Projects or programs you developed	2	3	3	3
Q65: Grants you helped bring into your organization	2	1	2	3
Q66: Dollars raised in grants or donations	14,544	26,096	62,259	59,627

Interestingly, graduates in the Full-Time group were more productive than the Overtime group in all the highlighted areas. While there could be a variety of possible explanations for this difference, it may be that the Overtime group is pushing too hard and experiencing diminishing returns on their involvement. This supposition is backed up by earlier data showing that the Overtime group was least likely to strongly agree with a variety of personal improvements relating to balance and were least likely to practice Balance on a regular basis.

Summary

A review of all categories shows that graduates in the Low-Time group both practiced and viewed themselves as being the most balanced of all the groups. However, this group was also generally the least likely to show other personal improvements or to practice the other values and skills as regularly as the other three groups. They were also least likely to believe they had a clear vision, were accomplishing their mission, or were implementing and achieving their Breakthrough Plan. In addition, they also experienced more challenges remaining and making transitions in ministry and were less likely to say that DVULI training helped them remain in ministry or increase their job performance. Finally, graduates in the Low-Time group perceived themselves as having the lowest levels of community involvement and were the least involved in a variety of outreach activities. All that said, it is important to remember that these findings were relative to the other groups; the Low-Time group still showed strong levels of agreement and involvement across most of the questions – just not as strong as the other three groups.

Graduates in the Part-Time group showed the most inconsistencies. While they generally showed levels of agreement or involvement somewhere above the Low-Time group and below the Full-Time and Overtime groups, they exceeded one or both of those groups in multiple questions regarding personal improvements, and several areas of vision, mission, Breakthrough Plan, and community involvement. It may be that this confusing pattern is at least partly a function of the wide range of hours (11 – 30 hours) we assigned to this group for the purposes of analysis. For example, a person who averaged 11 hours of ministry per week would most likely answer more like a Low-Timer while a person who averaged 30 hours per week would more likely respond like a person who worked full-time. This could cause interesting variations in some of the responses since this category reflects a wide range of ministry hours.

Graduates in both the Full-Time and Overtime groups were generally the most likely to strongly agree that, as a result of DVULI training, they had made personal improvements (with the exception of areas of balance for the Overtime group). They were also most likely to practice their values and skills on a regular basis and show the strongest agreement in the areas of vision and mission, Breakthrough Plan implementation and achievement, and community involvement. In addition, they were least likely to say they were challenged in remaining or transitioning in ministry and were most likely to say that DVULI training helped them remain in ministry and increase their job performance. Finally, graduates in the Full-Time and Overtime groups perceived themselves as having the highest levels of community involvement and were the most involved in a variety of outreach activities.

Graduates in the Overtime group showed several unique characteristics: they showed the weakest agreement in questions relating to balance and were the least likely to practice the value of balance on a daily basis. Although they strongly believed they had benefited from DVULI training in the majority of questions, they were somewhat less productive than the Full-Time group in a number of areas relating to community outreach activities such as youth outreach, mentoring, and training.

Implications and Recommendations

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the Low-Time group is managing their multiple commitments both within and outside of ministry. This group certainly appeared to benefit from the DVULI training on balance and heavily applied this core value to their lives. It is also important to remember that, while the Low-Time group scored lower than the other groups on many questions, they still had relatively high rates overall and should not be thought of as having somehow failed DVULI training. That said, relative to the other groups, the Low-Time group showed consistently lower rates of strong agreement, achievement, and involvement across a wide number of questions and areas. These findings consistently lend support to the idea that the less hours per week a person serves in ministry, the less likely they are to practice the values, skills, and actions they learned in the Initiative. They are also less likely to remain in ministry and less likely to demonstrate ministry involvement in changing people's lives in a wide variety of ways. Quite simply, the return on investment appears to be less for people who are unable to devote significant amounts of time to ministry.

The DVULI staff may wish to consider whether applicants who are unable to devote significant amounts of time to their ministries are appropriate for DVULI training. At the time of application, staff could carefully screen DVULI applicants on their current level of ministry to determine if that individual is involved enough in regular ministry to merit their inclusion into DVULI training.

The Full-Time and Overtime groups consistently demonstrated the principle that the more hours per week a person serves in ministry, the more likely they generally are to practice the values, skills, and actions they learned in the Initiative. They were also more likely to remain in ministry and demonstrated ministry involvement in changing people's lives in a wide variety of

ways. Using this principle, DVULI staff may wish to select as many individuals as possible from these profiles in order to maximize the return on their investment.

That said, DVULI trainers may wish to spend more time and energy on the both value and practice of Balance with graduates who are categorized in the Overtime group. This group of over-achievers, which represents fully one-fourth of all graduates, appears to be experiencing diminishing returns in overall productivity as measured by levels of community involvement. Perhaps even more emphasis on the need for balance, along with new ways to help participants incorporate Balance into their daily lives, would help them to more effectively manage their multiple commitments, thereby actually making them more effective ministers with a lower overall time commitment.

Paid vs. Volunteer Ministry

The DVULI Alumni Survey also asked graduates to fill in the average number of paid or volunteer hours they had worked in a typical week in the past year. For the purpose of analysis, we combined hours spent in 'youth ministry' and 'other ministry' into one variable. Findings must be interpreted with some caution because, in some cases, a person was paid as a youth minister but also volunteered some hours in either a youth ministry or other ministry. Of the 251 graduates who had remained in some form of ministry, 82 individuals (32.7%) worked primarily as volunteers and 169 (67.3%) persons worked primarily as paid employees.

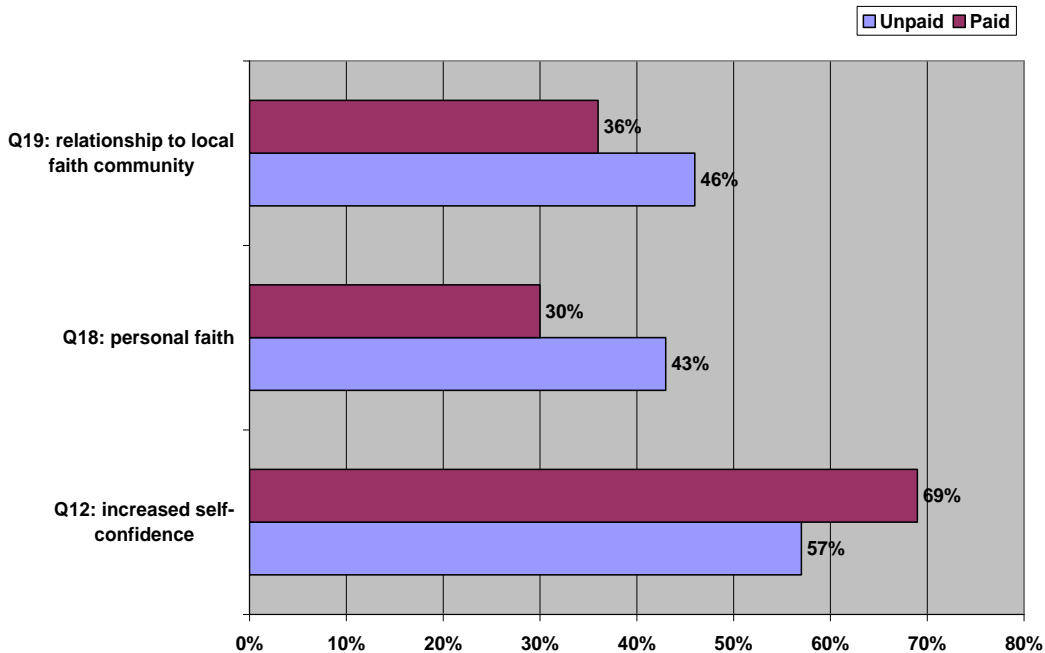
Personal Improvement

Within the section *Personal Improvement*, Table 11.29 shows the three questions (out of 14 total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. While a larger percentage of Paid graduates believed they had gained more self-confidence than the Volunteer graduates as a result of DVULI training, the Volunteers believed they had grown more strongly in both personal faith and in their relationship to their local faith community.

Given that only three of fourteen questions in this section showed moderate differences, it is reasonable to conclude that both Paid and Volunteer graduates were strongly benefiting from the DVULI training.

TABLE 11.29

Paid vs. Volunteer Ministry x Personal Improvement



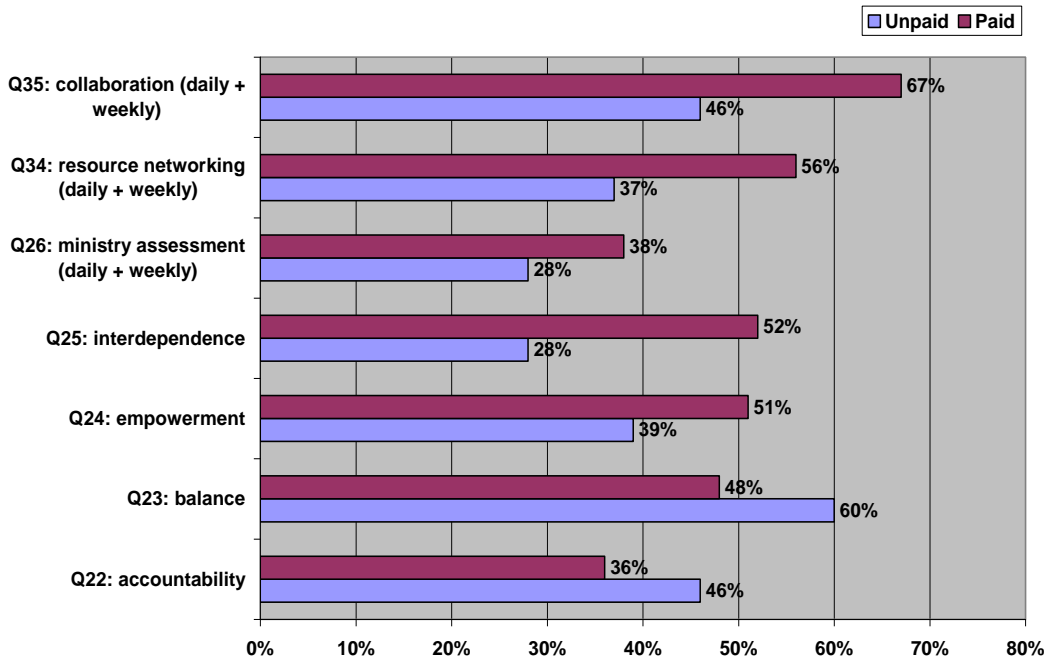
Within the sections *Core Values & Breakthrough Skills*, Table 11.30 shows seven questions (out of 12 total questions for these two sections) with a substantial difference in levels of practice of the core values or breakthrough skills. While Volunteers were more likely to practice the values of accountability and balance on a regular basis, the Paid graduates were more likely to practice empowerment, interdependence, ministry assessment, resource networking, and collaboration on a regular basis.

Volunteers may be more regularly using practice of balance and accountability in their personal lives and ministries because they are often attempting to fit their ministry activities in around their paid jobs and other responsibilities. They may find that balance and accountability are more necessary in order to juggle these multiple demands on their time and energy and so incorporate the values more consciously into their daily lives and ministries.

On the other hand, Paid graduates consistently and strongly practiced values and skills that require interaction with others in ministry. Such interactions would be much more frequent among those who were paid because they would more likely be in ministry positions that provided the time and connections to empower, collaborate, and network regularly with others in and out of the ministry. They would also be more likely to have the time and leadership status to shape their own ministry direction and would be more likely than volunteers to use the tools of ministry assessment on a regular basis.

TABLE 11.30

Paid vs. Volunteer Ministry x Values & Skills

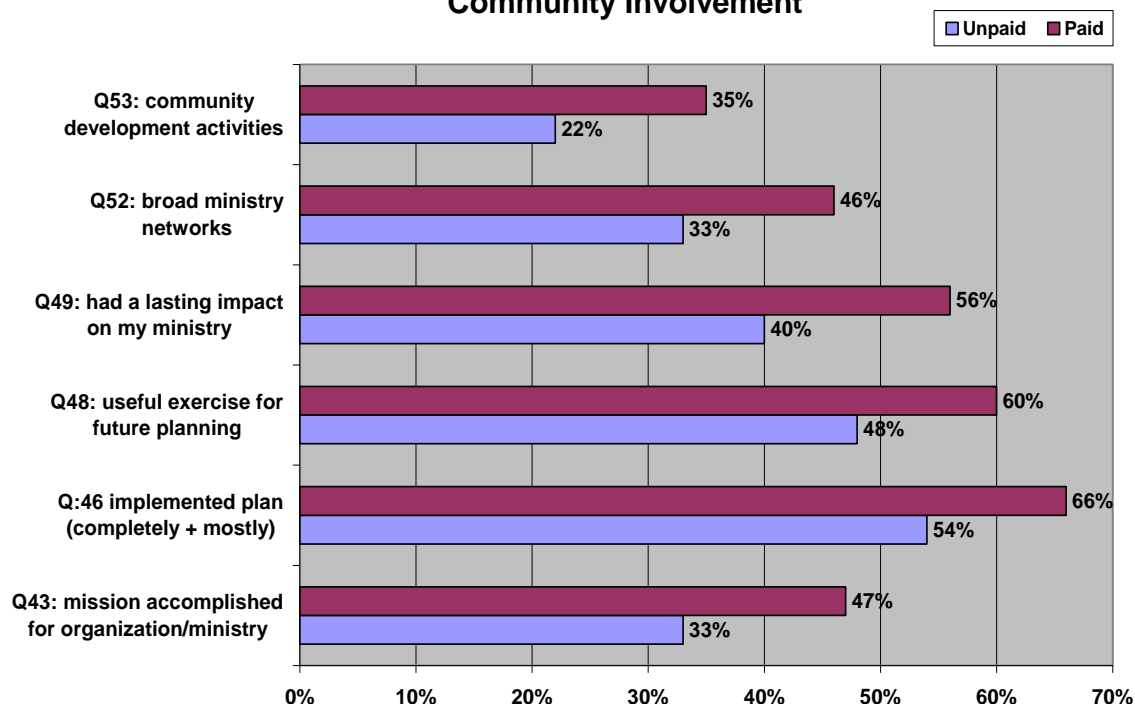


Vision/Mission, Breakthrough Plan, & Community Involvement

Within the sections *Vision/Mission, Breakthrough Plan* and *Community Involvement*, Table 11.31 shows six questions (out of 17 total questions for these three sections) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. In the *Vision/Mission* category, Paid graduates more strongly agreed that they had accomplished their mission for their organization or ministry. We would expect that this question would show Paid graduates with stronger agreement since they are more likely than Volunteers to have accomplished their mission within an organization or ministry where they are paid, often for full-time ministry.

TABLE 11.31

Paid vs. Volunteer x Vision/Mission, Breakthrough Plan & Community Involvement



In the Breakthrough Plan category, Paid graduates more strongly agreed that they had implemented their Breakthrough Plan, that it was a useful exercise, and that it had had a lasting impact on their ministry. Again, such differences might be expected since Paid graduates are more likely than Volunteers to have the time and freedom to implement a Breakthrough Plan within their ministry, leading them to appreciate its usefulness and believe it had had a long-lasting impact on their ministries.

Finally, in the Community Involvement category, Paid graduates more strongly agreed that they had developed broad ministry networks and were more involved in community development activities than the Volunteer graduates. These findings are consistent with questions in earlier categories in that Paid graduates would more likely than Volunteers to be in ministry positions that provided the time and connections to empower, collaborate, and network regularly with others in and out of the ministry.

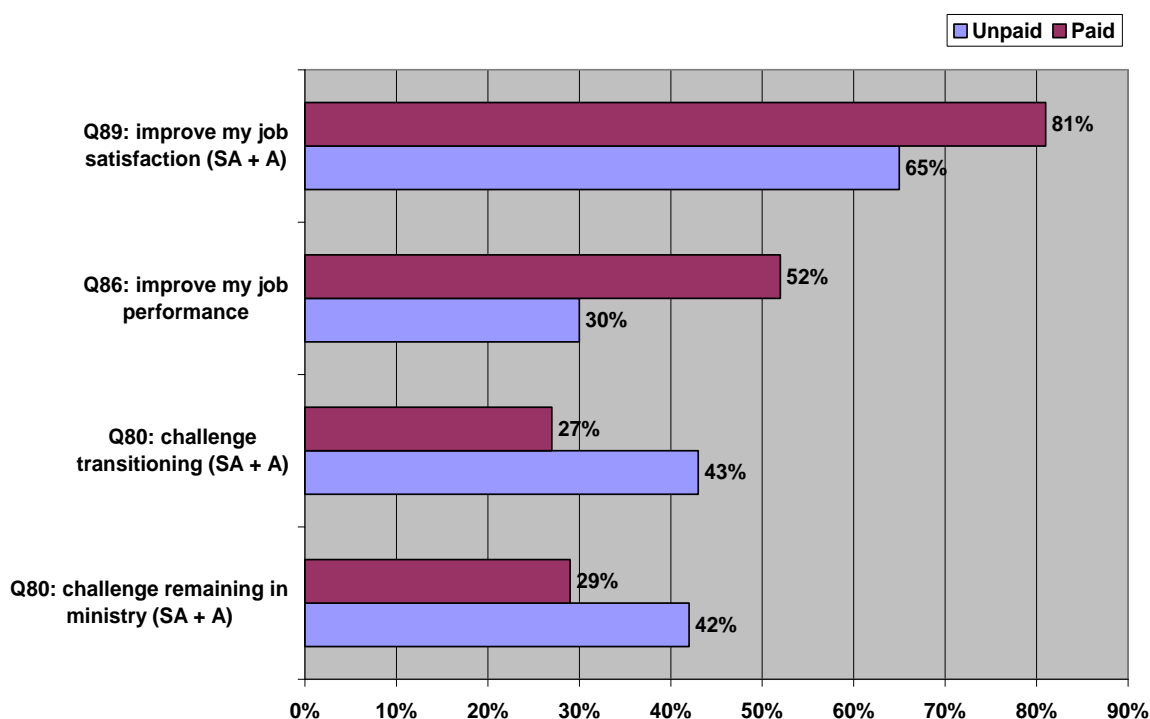
Ongoing Challenges & Vocational Impact

Within the sections *Ongoing Challenges* and *Vocational Impact*, Table 11.32 shows the four questions (out of 15 total questions in both sections) in which graduates had at least a 10%

difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. Volunteer graduates more strongly agreed that they were challenged to remain in ministry and had difficulties transitioning between ministries. In general, compared to those in paid ministry, volunteers often work less hours and have less control over their work environments, so they might be expected to experience these challenges more strongly than Paid graduates.

TABLE 11.32

Paid vs. Volunteer x Challenges & Vocational Impact



On the other hand, Paid graduates were more likely than Volunteers to strongly agree that DVULI training had helped them improve both their job performance and job satisfaction. Again, such differences might be best explained by factoring in Paid graduates' generally higher number of work hours and greater control of their work environments, resulting in greater job performance and satisfaction with the results of their work.

Community Impact

Table 11.33 also shows some interesting differences between Paid and Volunteer graduates. Compared to Volunteers, Paid graduates were more likely to minister to a greater number of youth both before and after DVULI training. They also experienced higher rates of improvement in youth ministry, with Volunteers increasing their youth contacts by 23% and

Paid graduates increasing their youth contacts by 38%. Paid graduates also mentored and trained more individuals, partnered with many more organizations, and raised more dollars in grants and donations. Again, all these differences might be expected given that Paid graduates are more likely to work full-time and have greater autonomy over their ministry plans and activities.

TABLE 11.33

Community Impact x Paid Ministry	No	Yes
Q56: Youth ministered BEFORE DVULI	136	177
Q57: Youth ministered AFTER DVULI	169	274
Q58: Individuals mentored	8	10
Q59: Individuals trained	82	100
Q60: Graduates you communicate with monthly	2	3
Q61: Community projects with graduates in city	2	3
Q62: Organizations you partnered with	5	10
Q63: Projects joined with other organizations	3	4
Q64: Projects or programs you developed	2	3
Q65: Grants you helped bring into your organization	1	2
Q66: Dollars raised in grants or donations	29,317	52,691

Summary

Compared to graduates who mainly participated as volunteers in ministry efforts, paid graduates believed they had gained more self-confidence and were more likely to practice empowerment, interdependence, ministry assessment, resource networking, and collaboration on a regular basis. They also more strongly agreed that they had accomplished their mission for their organization or ministry, had implemented their Breakthrough Plan and believed that it was a useful exercise and that it had had a lasting impact on their ministry. In addition, Paid graduates more strongly agreed that they had developed broad ministry networks and were more involved in community development activities than the Volunteer graduates. They were also more likely than Volunteers to strongly agree that DVULI training had helped them improve both their job performance and job satisfaction. In the area of community impact, Paid graduates were more likely to minister to a greater number of youth both before and after DVULI training and experienced higher rates of improvement in their youth ministry. Finally,

Paid graduates mentored and trained more individuals, partnered with many more organizations, and raised more dollars in grants and donations than Volunteer graduates.

In contrast, Volunteers believed they had grown more strongly in both personal faith and in their relationship to their local faith community. They were also more likely to practice the values of accountability and balance on a regular basis. Finally, Volunteer graduates more strongly agreed that they were challenged to remain in ministry and had difficulties transitioning between ministries.

Implications and Recommendations

It is first important to be reminded that, relative to the total number of questions that are being analyzed in this section, a fairly small proportion of questions showed substantial differences between the two groups. This implies that DVULI staff should be pleased with the strong levels of agreement and performance that both groups demonstrated and should be cautious about major changes to either recruiting or curriculum.

That said, Paid graduates consistently and strongly practiced values and skills that require interaction with others in ministry. As noted earlier, such interactions would be much more likely among those who were paid because they would more likely be in ministry positions that provided the time and connections to empower, collaborate, and network regularly with others in and out of the ministry. They would also be more likely to have the time, freedom, and leadership status to shape their own ministry direction and implement their Breakthrough Plans. As a result, Paid graduates showed higher impact in a number of areas, particularly those that involved collaboration and networking. DVULI staff should consider the recruiting and training for Paid participants to be strong, with no changes needed for this group.

Volunteers showed few areas of superiority over the Paid graduates, but may be more regularly using practice of balance and accountability in their personal lives and ministries because they are often attempting to fit their ministry activities in around their paid jobs and other responsibilities. DVULI staff may wish to consider reducing the total number of volunteers that they accept into the program, particularly among those who are unable to commit significant amounts of time and energy to their ministry projects. Volunteers who are accepted into the program should also be able to demonstrate a certain level of autonomy and flexibility to shape their ministries or the impact of their service is likely to be minimized and they are more likely to experience frustrations relating to productivity, job satisfaction, and ministry longevity. DVULI staff may also wish to tailor the curriculum to address concerns and issues that are more likely to be present (or absent) in the ministry lives of Volunteer participants.

City Size

One key question being asked by DVULI staff is whether the size of a city has any impact on a variety of key variables. Answers to such questions may influence both recruitment and training practices. However, readers should interpret findings with some caution because some differences between cities may have emerged due to the unique dynamics of the groups and city coordinators who were involved in DVULI training.

To determine city size, DVULI staff first located population statistics from the 2006 U.S. Census Bureau. They then broke the cities into small, medium, and large designations, with Small cities requiring less than 500,000 residents, Medium cities requiring between 500,000 and 1,000,000 residents, and Large cities requiring more than 1,000,000 residents. While these size designations were somewhat arbitrary, DVULI staff felt these categories were reasonable representations of the nature of each city's size, scope, and complexity. Table 11.34 provides a breakdown of each city that was included in each category.

TABLE 11.34

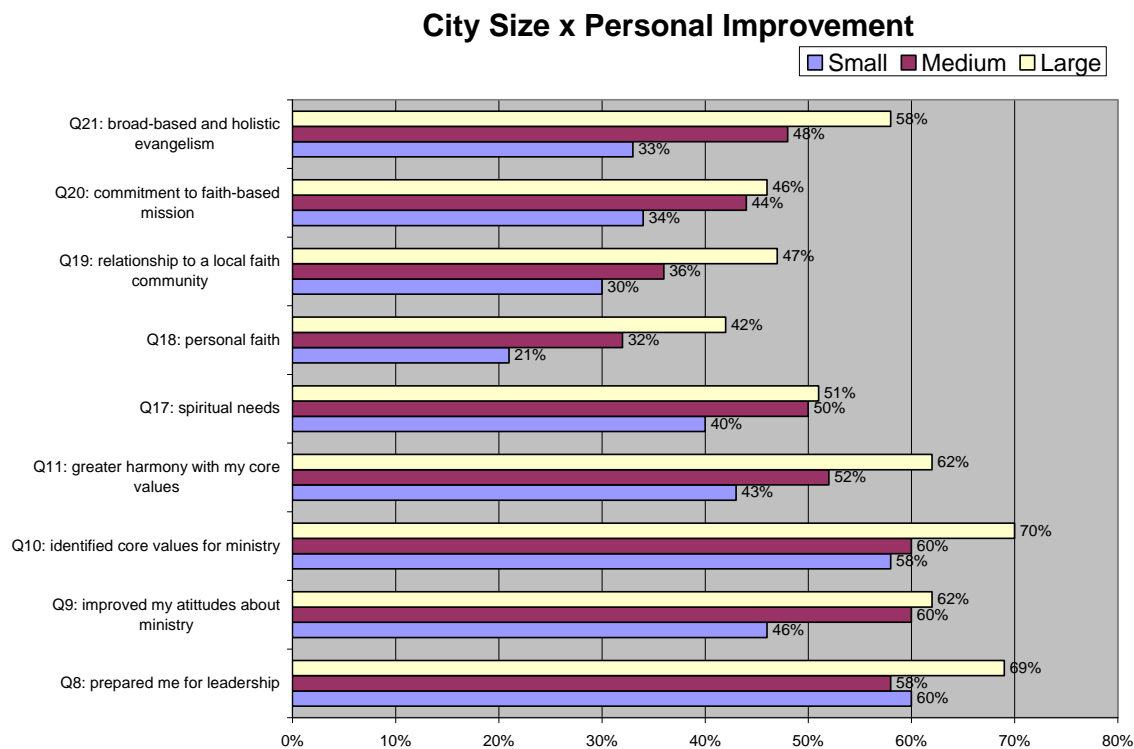
SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Birmingham 229,424	Albuquerque 504,949	Phoenix 1,512,986
Orlando 220,196	Denver 566,974	Los Angeles 3,849,378
Grand Rapids 193,083	Kansas City, MO & K 591,107	Chicago 2,833,321
Patterson 148,708	Portland 537,081	Philadelphia 1,448,394
Pittsburgh 312,819	Boston 590,763	San Antonio 1,296,682
	Memphis 670,902	Houston 2,144,491
	Indianapolis 785,597	San Diego 1,256,951
	Detroit 871,121	

Personal Improvement

Table 11.35 shows the nine questions (out of 14 total questions in this section) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. In all nine questions, graduates from Large cities believed they had made the largest personal improvements in a variety of areas in their lives. In contrast, in all but one of the questions, graduates from Small cities showed the least personal improvements.

One possible explanation for these differences is that graduates in large cities are often more isolated from other individuals and resources than those in smaller cities. As a result, DVULI training may make a larger impact on personal growth because the challenges and needs are greater for these individuals prior to the training.

TABLE 11.35



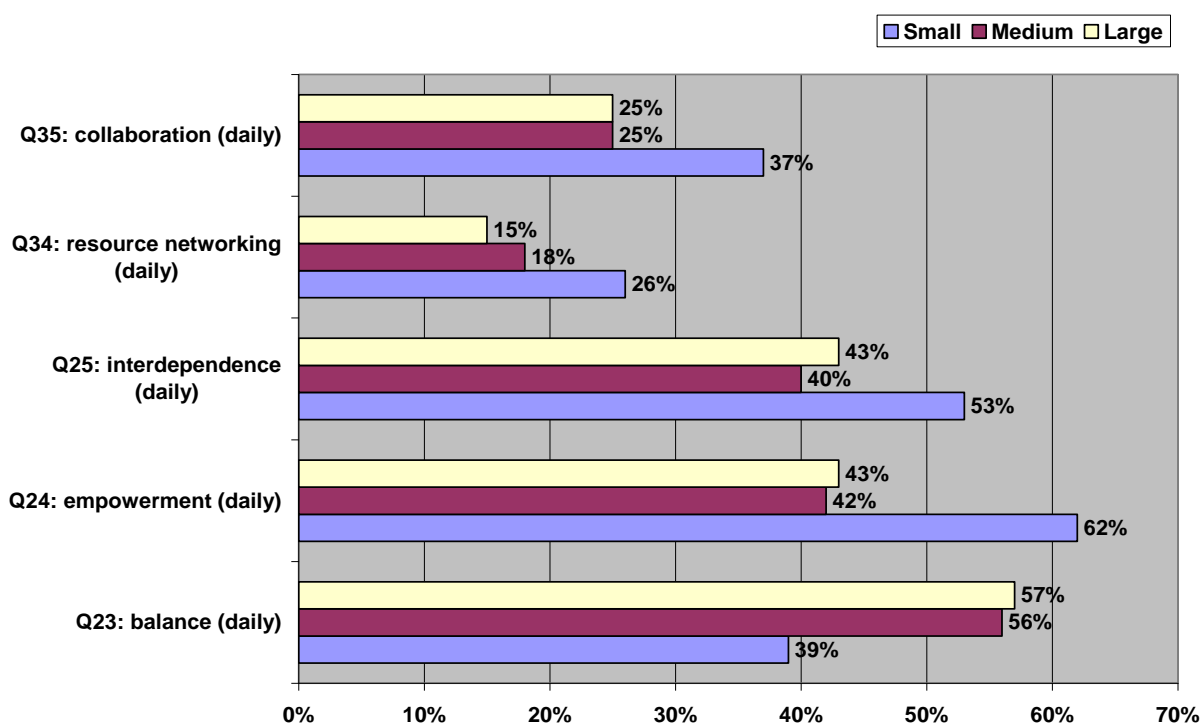
Within the sections *Core Values* and *Breakthrough Skills*, Table 11.36 shows five questions (out of 12 total questions for these two sections) with a substantial difference in Daily practice of the values and skills. In four of the five questions, graduates from Small cities showed the highest levels of daily practice of these values or skills. Graduates from Medium and Large cities showed the highest levels of daily practice of Balance in their lives.

It is interesting to note that the four questions where Small city graduates showed higher levels of daily practice are all related in some way to interaction with others. The values or skills

of Empowerment, Interdependence, Resource Networking, and Collaboration all require substantial use of networks and community interaction. Such skills are perhaps more likely to occur in small cities because the geographic distances are smaller and the opportunities for networking between DVULI graduates and others in ministry are greater. In contrast, graduates in Medium and Large cities may perhaps practice Balance more regularly because the size, scope, and isolation of their ministries requires them to exercise more self-care in order to remain vital in their ministries. However, these interpretations should be taken with caution because the majority of values and skills showed no differences between groups.

TABLE 11.36

City Size x Values & Skills



Vision/Mission, Breakthrough Plan, & Community Involvement

Within the sections *Vision/Mission, Breakthrough Plan* and *Community Involvement*, Table 11.37 shows seven questions (out of 17 total questions for these three sections) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. In the Vision/Mission category, both Medium and Large city graduates showed stronger agreement in their vision for their personal mission and their city or metro area than Small city graduates. Large city graduates showed the strongest agreement in questions relating to vision for their organization or ministry and their local communities. However, there were no differences

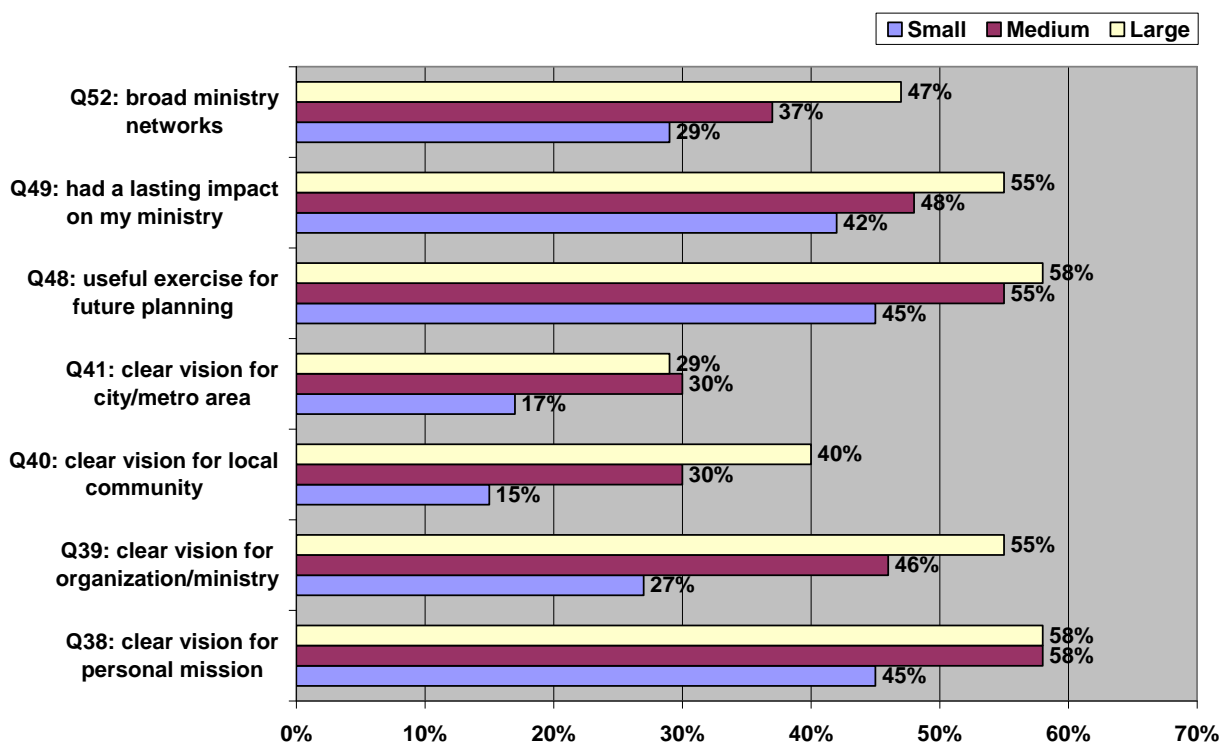
between groups in questions related to actually accomplishing their vision and mission across these four areas.

In the Breakthrough Plan category, Large city graduates again showed higher levels of agreement than Small or Medium graduates in their belief that the Breakthrough Plan had been a useful planning exercise and had had a lasting impact on their ministry. However, there were no differences between the groups in questions relating to actually implementing or achieving their Plan's goals.

In the Community Involvement category, Large city graduates were most likely to believe that DVULI training had helped them develop broad ministry networks, but there were no differences in any of the other four questions in this category.

TABLE11.37

City Size x Vision/Mission & Breakthrough Plan/Impact



Although Large city graduates showed the strongest agreement across all questions in these three categories, most of the questions were related to changes in planning rather than impact. It may be that Large city participants received the greatest benefits in terms of changing their mindset and planning around ministry, but when it came time to implement their visions or plans, the Medium and Small city graduates equalized the differences. Large city graduates'

greater development of broad ministry networks may again relate to the isolation they felt prior to DVULI training – following training they may have become much more closely networked to others within their communities and city.

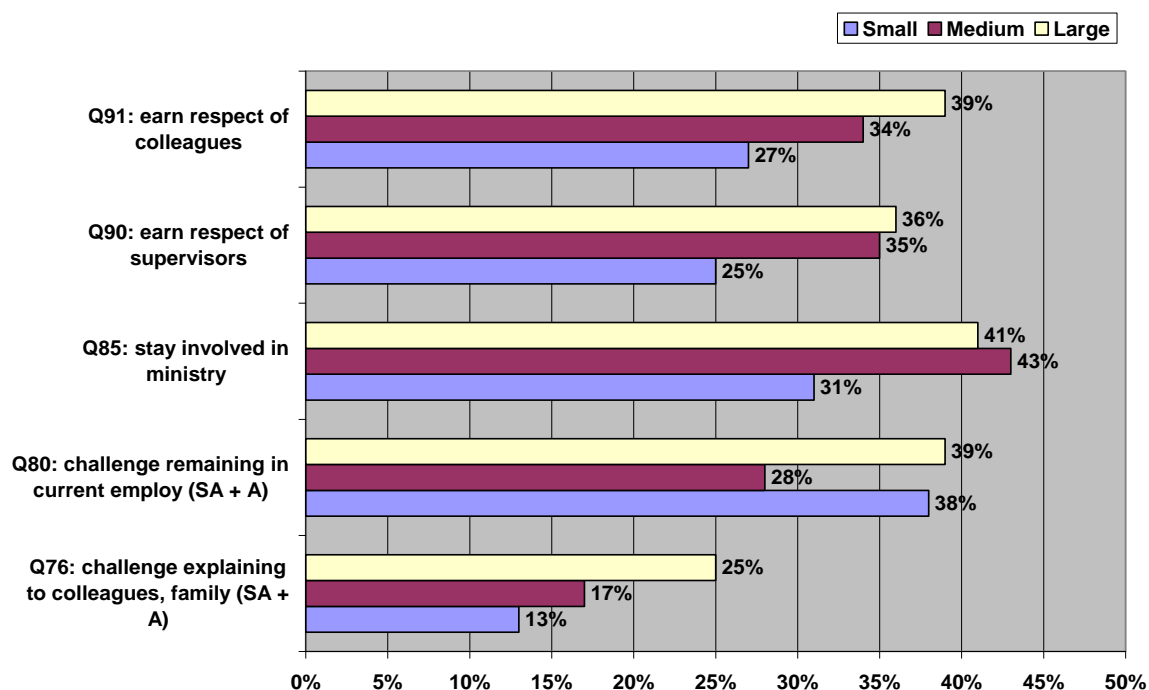
Ongoing Challenges & Vocational Impact

Within the sections *Ongoing Challenges* and *Vocational Impact*, Table 11.38 shows the five questions (out of 15 total questions in both sections) in which graduates had at least a 10% difference in their Strongly Agree response rates. Large city graduates had the most challenges both explaining DVULI concepts to colleagues, family, and friends and remaining in their current employment. However, they were also more likely than Small city graduates believe that DVULI training had helped them to stay involved in ministry and earn the respect of their supervisors and colleagues.

Again, these differences may well relate to the relative isolation that Large city graduates felt prior to DVULI training. Following their involvement in the Initiative, more challenges emerged relating to how to explain and implement their new leadership vocabulary and approach, but also resulted in greater ministry involvement and respect from colleagues and supervisors. Once again, it is important to remind readers that ten questions across these two categories showed no substantial differences between groups, so differences that do exist should be interpreted with caution.

TABLE 11.38

City Size x Challenges & Vocational Impact



Community Impact

Table 11.39 shows very few differences between Small, Medium, and Large groups in terms of community impact. Small cities showed a 25% increase in the number of youth ministered to before vs. after DVULI training, while Medium and Large cities showed 22% and 45% increases, respectively. Small cities also showed substantially more individuals trained than the other two groups.

It is important to note that the higher numbers in the Small cities column are likely related to the very active Grand Rapids network of graduates who have developed extensive outreach, mentoring, organizational partnerships, and leadership training activities in their city as part of their GRIL ministry.

Perhaps more striking, however, are the few differences that do exist between the three groups. Given that virtually all the differences that did exist across questions and categories were related to the Large cities, it may be that, prior to DVULI training, individuals in those cities were performing at lower levels relative to Medium and Small city participants due to a variety of factors including high ministry loads, isolation, and other ministry challenges. However, following their involvement in DVULI, they raised their performance levels to those of the graduates in Medium and Small cities. This improvement is particularly striking in the 45% increase in the number of youth ministered to following DVULI training.

TABLE 11.39

Community Impact x City Size	Small	Med	Large
Q56: Youth ministered BEFORE DVULI	185	148	156
Q57: Youth ministered AFTER DVULI	245	190	288
Q58: Individuals mentored	11	9	9
Q59: Individuals trained	134	74	93
Q60: Graduates you communicate with per month	3	4	3
Q61: Community projects with graduates in your city	2	2	2
Q62: Organizations you partnered with	10	8	8
Q63: Projects joined with other organizations	5	4	4
Q64: Projects or programs you developed	3	3	3
Q65: Grants you helped bring into your organization	3	2	2
Q66: Dollars raised in grants or donations	33,201	44,871	49,875

Summary

Graduates from Large cities believed they had made the largest personal improvements in their lives and showed stronger agreement in their vision for all areas of their mission. They also showed the highest levels of agreement in their belief that the Breakthrough Plan had been a useful planning exercise and had had a lasting impact on their ministry. In addition, they were most likely to believe that DVULI training had helped them develop broad ministry networks. However, they were also most likely to have experienced the most challenges in explaining DVULI concepts to colleagues, family, and friends and remaining in their current employment. Conversely, they were most likely to believe that DVULI training had helped them to stay involved in ministry and earn the respect of their supervisors and colleagues. Finally, Large city graduates showed the largest gains in the number of youth served following DVULI training.

Along with Large city graduates, Medium city graduates were most likely to practice balance in their daily lives and have a stronger vision for their personal and city/metro mission than Small city graduates.

Compared to Large and Medium city respondents, graduates from Small cities showed the least personal improvements but the highest levels of daily practice of Empowerment, Interdependence, Resource Networking, and Collaboration.

With these differences in mind, however, it is important to remember that there were no differences between groups in a substantial number of questions across all categories, most notably in areas that related to implementing goals and impacting the community.

Implications and Recommendations

Given that virtually all the differences that did exist across questions and categories were related to the Large cities, it may be that, prior to DVULI training, individuals in those cities were performing at lower levels compared to Medium and Small city participants due to a variety of factors including high ministry loads, isolation, and other ministry challenges. However, following their involvement in DVULI, they raised their performance levels to those of the graduates in Medium and Small cities. This was particularly striking in the 45% increase in the number of youth they ministered to following DVULI training. Such improvements appear to show that Large city graduates benefitted the most from DVULI training, with Large city graduates ‘catching up’ to Medium and Large city graduates in a number of key areas.

Conversely, Small cities were particularly adept in demonstrating values or skills related to networking and social interaction. Such skills are perhaps more likely to occur in small cities because the geographic distances are smaller and the opportunities for networking between DVULI graduates and others in ministry are greater.

Given that there were no substantial differences in many of the questions across categories and most of the Community Impact outcomes, we are cautious about recommending any changes in recruiting practices by city size. However, DVULI staff may wish to consider the implications of higher rates of transition away from youth ministry among Large city graduates (discussed in the next section). In addition, DVULI staff may wish to wish to consider curriculum changes that further assist participants in large cities with the relatively greater challenges of interdependence, resource networking and collaboration given the larger geographic distances and greater tendencies toward ministry isolation. DVULI staff may also wish to consider training at least three cohorts of participants from large cities over several years in order to develop a critical mass of alumni in order to better facilitate the networking and social interaction that are a challenge in larger city environments. Alternatively, staff may wish to consider recruiting a larger number of participants in a single cohort to create a critical mass of graduates in one city location.

Remaining in Youth Ministry

One of the key goals of the Initiative has been to help participants remain in youth ministry. As part of the DVULI Alumni Survey, graduates were asked the question *‘Have you remained in youth ministry since completing DVULI training?’* Of the 271 responses, 184 graduates (67.6%) said ‘yes’, either consistently or with some interruption since graduation. Another 77 (28.3%) graduates said ‘no’, but were involved in other forms of ministry. The remaining 10 (4.1%) graduates either had no response or were no longer involved in ministry. For purposes of analysis, we eliminated the 10 graduates who had no response or were no longer in ministry.

While DeVos staff recognize that the calling to ministry sometimes broadened beyond youth ministry as graduates moved into other full-time and part-time ministry roles, it is interesting to compare those who have remained in youth ministry with those who have moved into other ministry roles. This comparison allows staff to more clearly understand the differences between these two groups and determine any need for changes in recruiting or training.

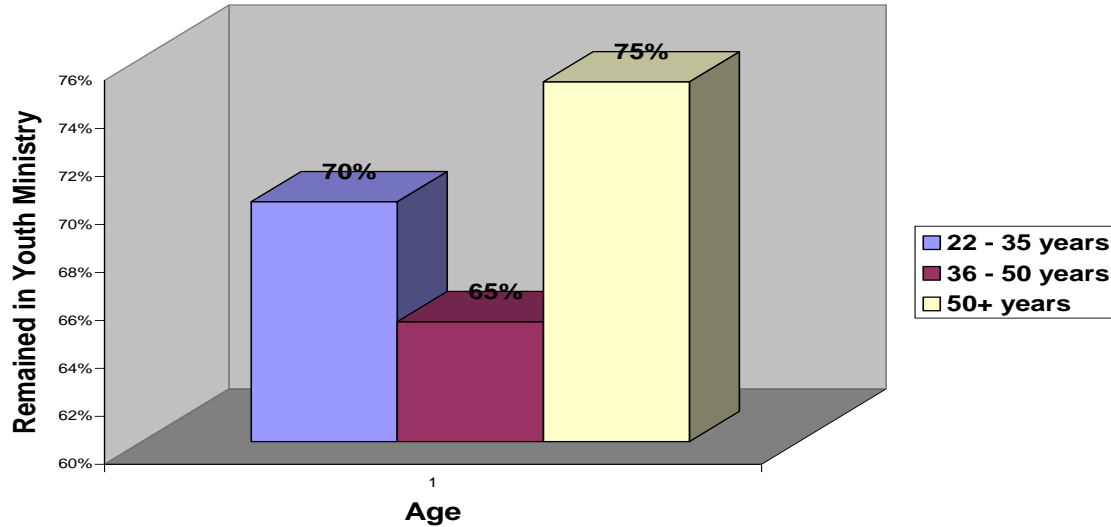
First, it is helpful to identify areas where no differences exist between these two groups. When comparing Youth Ministers to Other Ministers, there were no substantial differences in continuing youth ministry involvement between men and women (70% and 64%, respectively), those who were paid for ministry vs. those who were unpaid (72% vs. 65%), and those with different ethnic backgrounds (Hispanic, 68%; Black, 68%; White, 67%; Other, 73%).

Age

There are some areas, however, where differences do exist. In terms of graduates’ ages, Table 11.40 shows that older graduates (ages 51 years and above) were most likely to remain in youth ministry (75%), with younger graduates (ages 22 – 35 years) somewhat less likely (70%) and middle aged graduates (ages 36 – 50 years) least likely (65%) to remain in youth ministry. Such findings may indicate that older graduates are the most stable in their ministry careers and therefore least likely to change ministry roles. In contrast, middle aged graduates may be most likely to experience career transitions as they move between and within ministry roles.

TABLE 11.40

Remained in Youth Ministry x Age

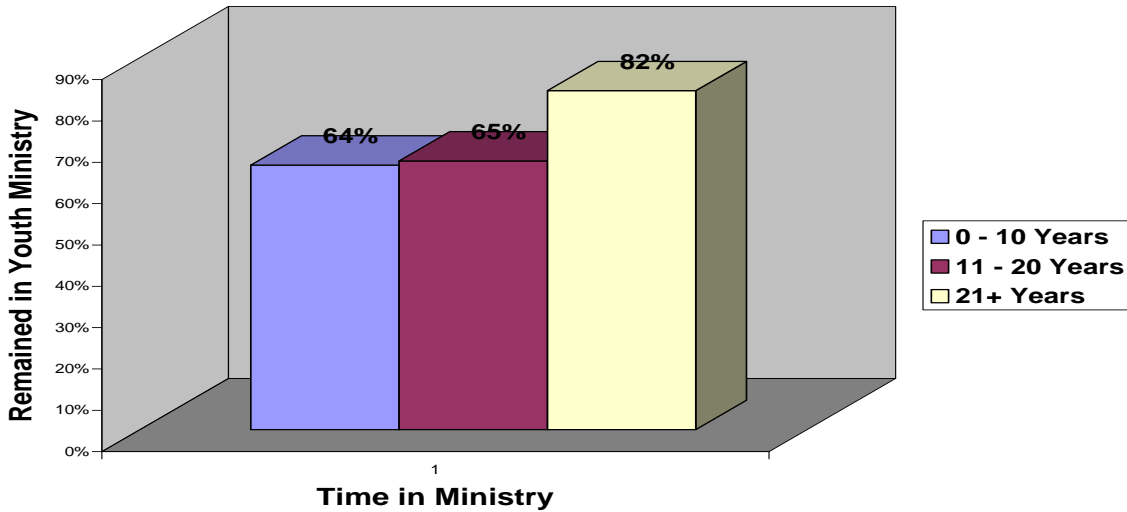


Years in Ministry

Table 11.41 shows virtually no difference between either the least experienced (0– 10 years in ministry) and the middle ministry years (11 – 20 years in ministry) graduates (64% and 65%, respectively). However, the most experienced ministry graduates (over 20 years in ministry) showed much higher levels (82%) of continued youth ministry involvement than the other two groups. This difference may suggest that those graduates who have the most ministry experience are more stable in their careers. This suggestion is supported by earlier findings in this chapter that showed that young ministry graduates were more likely to express ongoing challenges in remaining in their current employment.

TABLE 11.41

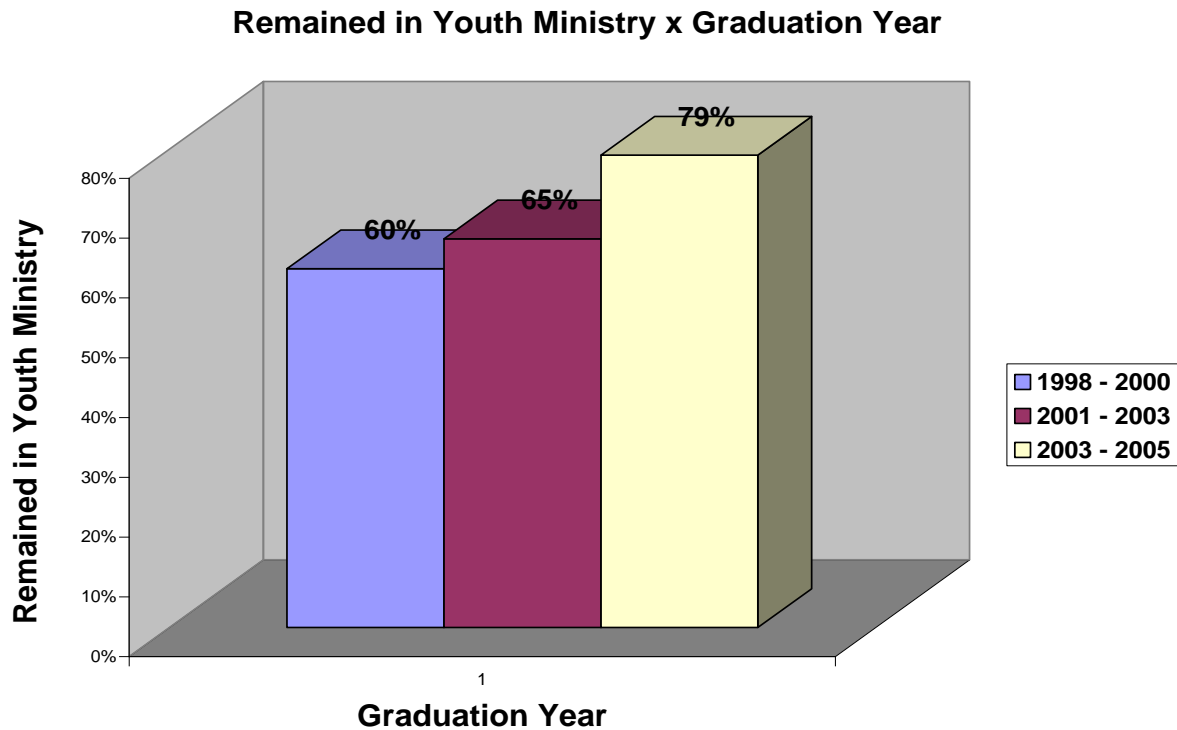
Remained in Youth Ministry x Time in Ministry



Year of DVULI Graduation

Table 11.42 shows that 60% of graduates remained in youth ministry from the early cohort (1998-2000), 65% remained in youth ministry from the middle cohort (2001-2003), and 79% remained in ministry from the later cohort (2004-2005). This steadily increasing trend in graduates who remained in youth ministry may be due to an improving curriculum that helps graduates remain in youth ministry for a longer period of time. However, this trend may also reflect the longer time gap between when a graduate completes DVULI training and the completion of the Alumni survey. As such, the early cohort has had a longer time period to change jobs, some of which are likely to be in non-youth ministry positions.

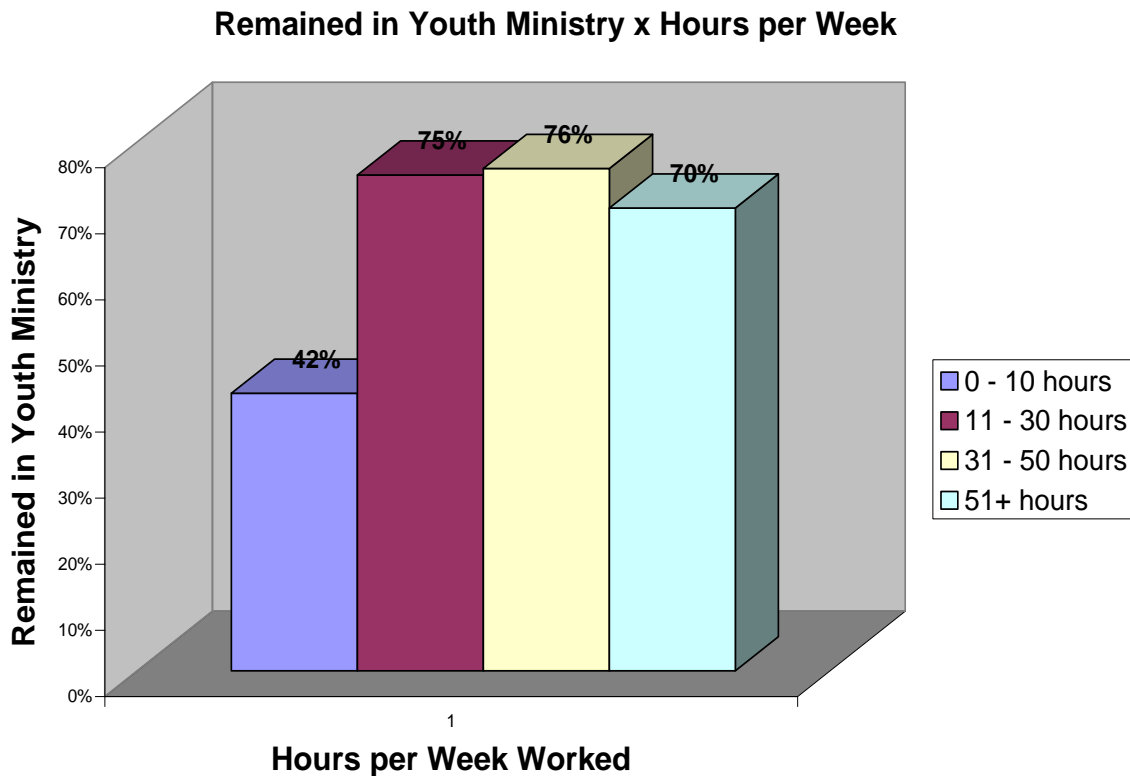
TABLE 11.42



Hours per Week in Ministry

Table 11.43 shows that Part-Time graduates (11 – 30 hours per week), Full-Time graduates (31 – 50 hours per week), and Overtime graduates (over 50 hours per week) all remained in youth ministry at about the same levels. As might be expected, those who averaged ten or less hours per week in ministry were much less likely to have remained in youth ministry. As was discussed earlier, this group was generally the least likely to believe they had a clear vision, were accomplishing their mission, or were implementing and achieving their Breakthrough Plan. In addition, they also experienced more challenges remaining and making transitions in ministry and were less likely to say that DVULI training helped them remain in ministry or increase their job performance. This group also perceived themselves as having the lowest levels of community involvement and were the least involved in a variety of outreach activities. All of those differences help to explain the relatively lower rates in this group.

TABLE 11.43

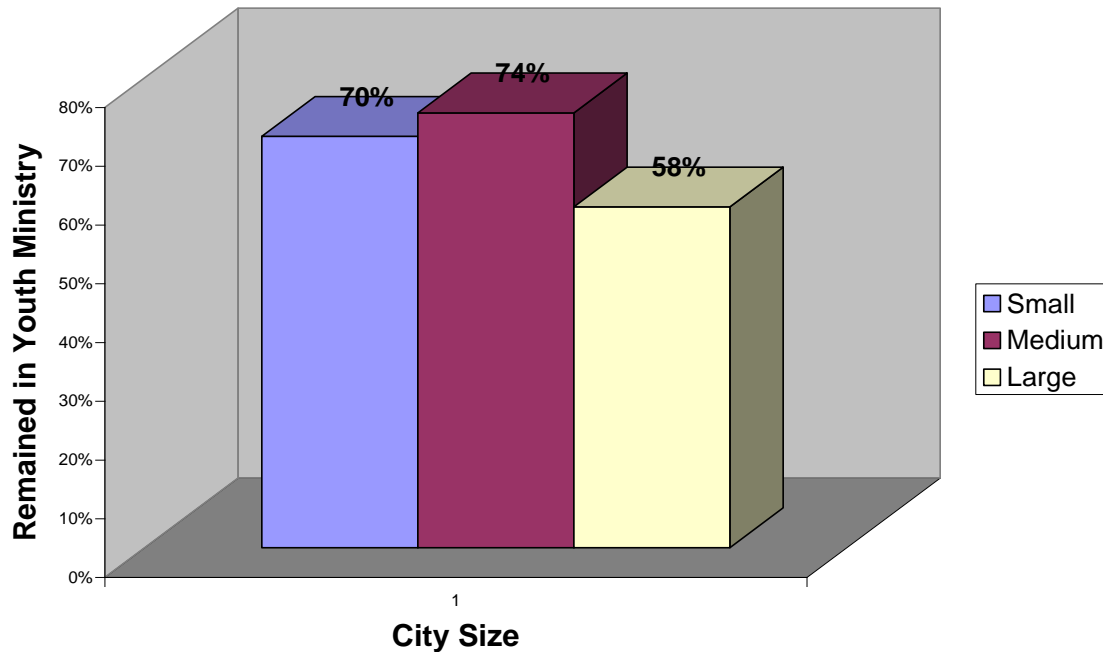


City Size

Table 11.44 shows only small differences between small and medium-sized cities (70% and 74%, respectively), but a substantially lower percentage of large city graduates (58%) who have remained in youth ministry. Such differences may be caused by the relatively larger number of alternative ministry opportunities open to graduates in larger cities. It is also important to remind readers that these differences do not represent substantial differences in the number of graduates who left ministry entirely, but rather those who transitioned from youth ministry into other forms of ministry.

TABLE 11.44

Remained in Youth Ministry x City Size



Summary, Implications and Recommendations

Before discussing each of the categories, it is important to note that while retaining two-thirds of participants in youth ministry is a strong indicator of the program's success, when considering the broader retention goals of the Initiative, it is even more impressive to see that 96% of all graduates have remained in some form of ministry since their graduation. By any standard this is an overwhelmingly positive measure of success, particularly when this retention has occurred across a ten year period.

It is also important to recognize that ministry plans evolve and change over time, so movement out of youth ministry is not necessarily a negative situation. This is particularly true since almost every single graduate who responded to the Alumni survey continues to remain in ministry in some fashion or another. These findings provide an important context for the recommendations that follow.

The findings that there were virtually no differences across these three categories provide reassurance to DVULI staff that, in the areas of gender, pay, and ethnicity, no changes are needed in the recruiting or training of DVULI participants.

As noted earlier, middle aged graduates are least likely to have remained in youth ministry, perhaps due to expected career transitions that are likely to occur during these ministry years. Since earlier findings indicate that middle aged graduates show consistently high levels of agreement in a wide variety of survey items and also show strong performance on a variety of DVULI outcome areas, no changes in recruitment for this group are recommended at this time. However, given the expected career transitions that all groups experience, DVULI staff may wish to consider strengthening training discussions regarding how to deal more effectively with ministry challenges and transitions, some of which may be desirable but many of which may be undesirable and unavoidable.

As seen above, the most experienced ministry graduates showed much higher levels of continued youth ministry involvement, suggesting that these graduates are perhaps more stable in their ministry careers. Given earlier findings that showed that more experienced ministry graduates are highly productive across many outcome areas, no changes in either recruitment or training are recommended at this time.

As noted earlier, the more recent the year of DVULI graduation, the more likely the graduate was to have remained in youth ministry. Such findings may be the result of steadily improving DVULI training but may also reflect the amount of time that has passed since graduation, resulting in more job transitions. Given that neither these explanations require substantive changes, no changes in either recruitment or training are recommended at this time.

As was discussed above, those who averaged less than 10 hours per week in ministry were much less likely to have remained in youth ministry. As noted earlier in this chapter, they also scored much lower in virtually all areas of the survey. The findings for this question once again suggest screening out low ministry applicants at the time of application.

As seen above, a substantially lower percentage of Large city graduates have remained in youth ministry. If the goal of DVULI is to retain graduates in **youth** ministry, then it may be appropriate to reduce the number of large cities who participate in future DVULI training sessions. However, if DVULI staff are satisfied that the vast majority of graduates from all city sizes remained in ministry of some sort, then we recommend no changes in city size selection.

*Please note that a summary of all recommendations from the entire document will be provided in the Executive Summary section of this report.

Suggested DVULI Improvements

The Alumni Survey asked graduates to *“Please briefly describe: 1) the most frustrating challenge you have faced as a result of the DVULI training, and 2) let us know if DVULI could have done something differently to address it”*. This question gave graduates the opportunity to offer practical suggestions for addressing the challenges and frustrations that were described in Chapter 7, *Personal and Ministry Challenges and Frustrations*. Because a number of graduates’ suggestions for improvements dovetail nicely with the recommendations that we have made throughout this chapter, we decided to include graduates’ suggested improvements within this chapter. Please note that in order to better understand the graduates’ comments within the context of their individual experience, we ordered the quotes into a range of years when they graduated. By organizing the quotes in this way, we felt we could better protect the confidentiality of the participants. While doing so this still allows DVULI staff to understand that, for example, a curriculum update that they made during a particular year had already addressed the suggestion made by the graduate who completed the program during that range of years.

A total of 240 quotes were generated for both parts of the question above. It is interesting and important to note that only 36.2% of these comments from graduates were actually suggestions for improvements, while 63.8% of the responses actually took the opportunity to express satisfaction with the program as it existed when they graduated or simply left this second section blank. However, looked at differently, of the graduates who did make suggestions related to challenges and frustrations, 85.6% wrote some sort of comment describing their challenges following the DVULI experience. This shows that there were still a significant number of graduates who were frustrated by something but did not have any suggestions on what to do about it. Below is a list of all of the suggestions from the graduates. Each suggestion is important and each thought has something to add to the growth of this program. For this reason we decided to organize the comments into themes but actually include every one of the suggestions so none of the ideas or voices were lost through the process of condensing those ideas. Responses were arranged beginning with the major themes in descending order, including: 1) no suggestions, 2) better preparation for..., and 3) the development of post-graduation follow-up sessions/activities.

No Suggestions

There were a total of 227 frustrations listed as graduates answered the first half of the question. However, as noted above, only 88 suggestions were generated in the second half of the question. The remaining persons, representing 63.8% of the total responses, expressed appreciation, said that they had no suggestions or left the section blank. Where responses were left blank, we made the assumption that graduates had no suggestions to make and included these items in this total. Some of the responses recorded by the graduates for this theme include:

"None"

"No suggestion"

"N/A"

"I have nothing to add here."

Better Preparation for....

Some of the graduates felt that, prior to beginning the Initiative, they were ill-prepared for what was in store for them in the training. Others felt that various changes could be made to the curriculum or sequencing of the materials. Of the total responses, 7.5% are related to this major theme. Most of the graduates that made comments in this area explained that they were transformed in such a significant way that many of them were not adequately prepared for the experience. Suggestions for better preparing graduates for this experience included:

Graduation Years 1998 - 2000

"The only 'thing' that DVULI could have done differently (although I don't know what would have been best) was to prepare me for the significant internal change that I experienced. I don't know if I was ready for that change and the emotional turmoil that I went through in the midst of it."

"In that vein I think DeVos could strengthen their own image, publicize the program in some way to help the larger US community understand that this program is an effective, one-plus year professional training module for youth professionals and others. So that when people see it on a resume they will understand its implications for "change management ministry"; which is really what DeVos is and teaches. DeVos was clearly ahead of its time but many people don't know this. Also DeVos is an effective curriculum that is on par with some urban ministry graduate courses."

"I think the DVULI could also have prepared us for the challenges of the competing world of ministry."

"What would be helpful is to have DVULI provide additional resources or make them available such as... power points, transparencies, etc. (UYWI does a good job at providing workshop trainers with this type of resource.)"

"Since most presenters will note at the beginning of your training time that this training will "rock your world", a component being added to give additional tools to handle the emotional impact would be valuable. Perhaps time on a national conference level to have an open forum about this would be of value."

"I think there has to be better preparation for the student in letting them know that their world may be turned upside down after this training and what they thought to be ministry may change as they go through the process that they know they are not alone and this is part of the process. Almost everyone I know in _____ has changed ministry or organizations after this process because this training does change your life."

"I would suggest just sending the guide to discuss ways of presenting the material to your ministry."

"More in depth training in resource development."

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"Maybe DVULI could have made our personal goals more short term and realistic. This might have set a better stage for more sustained and personal training."

"I do think that there needs to be a better way on how to select a City manager. ... We must understand that being led by the political influences in any city only adds to the issues of trust and trauma."

"I think DVULI could have spent a little more time on how to deal with various personality types."

"The only thing that I would change is providing more complete information FOR SUPERVISORS at the onset of what a subordinate will be taught. This may make the implementation process simpler."

"I wished you could have helped with the organizational conflicts in my city during my time there. I have since learned that the recent class pushed leaders to work through some of their disagreements. Objectivity is so important."

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

"If DVULI could have honed in a little more on what one or two things we could have implemented, the process may have been less overwhelming."

"Perhaps if DVULI had included the supervisors in the training (if they had been willing, which is a big IF) or if we had been trained/guided in making necessary transitions from one ministry to another, perhaps I would not be experiencing the wilderness time that I am. Perhaps this wilderness time was in God's overall plan and I will be here until he feels that I am adequately prepared for something else."

"We should have been much more careful about who we allowed into the city group, with a more thorough and stringent evaluation process in place."

"Offer more workshops on transition."

Develop Post-Graduation Follow-Up Session/Activities

Some of the graduates mentioned that they would have benefitted from additional follow-up training after graduation. These responses represented 7.1% of the total responses. There were two sub-themes within this major theme: 1) suggestions for further learning and 2) suggestions for further communication with other graduates. The first subtheme primarily had to do with actually helping them digest all that they had learned. The second subtheme is one that includes comments on actually linking the past graduates to the current graduates to further their networking capabilities.

Suggestions for further learning

Graduation Years 1998 - 2000

"A personal assessment of meeting with a coach/consultant 6 months after the program might be helpful."

"I think it would be a good idea if DVULI would do local trainings at least once every two years. I know DVULI gives conferences etc. but there may be others like myself that needed and wanted to attend but for various reasons could not."

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"I really just need to do that myself, but maybe there is a way that DeVos can help us review?"

"Major frustration arose out of a commitment from the last local retreat where the whole group agreed to work together on one event after graduation. Several opportunities were presented, but only three out of 24 were committed to serving in a community workshop."

"...while there were training materials available, I wish there could have been a monthly follow-up--to reiterate and reinforce the 15 month training."

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

"DVULI has been a great resource. I think that the only change would be for there to be a schedule for at least six months of activities after graduation to transition people from the training into a support role for each other."

Graduation Year ????

"The most frustrating part is the letdown at the end...there should be opportunities for some of the participants to be involved as trainers or presenters...especially if they excelled in the process."

Suggestions for further communication with other graduates

Graduation Years 1998 - 2000

"The only thing I suppose that could be done differently would be to somehow strongly request or mandate that alums be invited to some sort of reception/graduation/kick-off etc. to ensure some type of connection between the classes. I'm not even certain who is in the class, so there is no way that I can offer myself as a resource."

"Maybe if there had been a 6 month or year follow up with the group?"

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"I'm not sure what DVULI could have done differently. I wish our group was more cohesive and mutually supportive...it had definite cliques that broke down the support structure."

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

"Better coordination and focused decision making from our DVULI national coordinator is needed in my opinion."

"The only thing I might suggest is more time in the program where there is more of a "maintenance" period where we are able to walk out some of the principles while we still have the regular accountability and support of our DVULI peers. This could be a six month structured program after graduation where DVULI graduates could team up to teach principles at each other's ministries, churches, etc."

Minor themes, along with all graduates' suggestions, are next presented in descending order, including: 1) suggestions for training others, 2) increasing time spent on specific topics, 3) involving different people in DVULI trainings, and 4) changes in the curriculum to cater to specific skills/ministries.

Suggestions for Training Others

In this minor theme, the graduates explain some different suggestions for the program relating to taking the DVULI information back and actually training other people. These suggestions represent 4.6% of the total responses.

Graduation Years 1998 - 2000

"I would suggest besides just sending the guide to discuss ways of presenting the material to your ministry."

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"Have a seminar dealing with the change in ministry that some people make as a result of their breakthrough."

"In an ideal world, there would have been a DVULI group here in NYC that I could have become involved with. My ministry on this coast would have been greatly impacted had that been the case. In many respects, it was like starting over for me."

"We should have put some training or program together or at least worked together to get your funding, and it never happened. Could DVULI have done something different? Not sure, but I question the selection process."

"How to address the changes DVULI suggests in the midst of mixed levels of leadership...."

"The only thing that I would change is providing more complete information FOR SUPERVISORS at the onset of what a subordinate will be taught. This may make the implementation process simpler."

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

"I think if we had the opportunity to receive start up funding (based on the type of program or services) this would show people that DeVos is fully invested in our joint success."

"I try to cover some of the content while focusing on the relationships built along the way as being priceless."

"The only thing I might suggest is more time in the program where there is more of a "maintenance" period where we are able to walk out some of the principles while we still have the regular accountability and support of our DVULI peers. This could be a six month structured program after graduation where DVULI graduates could team up to teach principles at each others' ministries, churches, etc."

Increased Time on Specific Topics

Some of the graduates mentioned that spending more time on specific topics could have helped them as they completed the program. Several of these comments were related to the integration of more spiritual content. This minor theme represents 2.9% of the total responses.

Graduation Years 1998 - 2000

"I would have liked to have had additional time to work through the issue I was experiencing with this module but since most of the group seemed to grasp the concept the instructor had to continue to move forward to cover the materials."

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"Maybe DVULI could have made our personal goals more short term and realistic. This might have set a better stage for more sustained and personal training."

"I'm frustrated we didn't get enough time on some of the key areas. I remember at the time wishing we had more time to do more personal work, and have our teachers coach us. I guess my frustration was - too much content without much practical application. More personal application with coaching would have made the course much more effective."

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

"Emphasize more on God's strength and his Spirit to guide you through. It doesn't have to be all on our strengths, but should be in His strength since it is His ministry."

"Though I believe and value the community based approach to ministry, I also highly value effective evangelism which I didn't feel the initiative challenged as much."

"Please put more emphasis on spiritual matters. The training is great but what is God saying, what is He doing. Sure, you're going to be equipped to do ministry, but it's God's will in how it's structured."

Involve Different/Additional People in DVULI Training

As noted earlier, some graduates expressed frustration with their attempts to try sharing DVULI concepts with family members and colleagues in ministry. Toward that end, graduates made several suggestions to help in that transition. These suggestions represent 2.5% of the total responses. The following sub-themes emerged within this minor theme: 1) involving spouses and 2) involving church leaders.

Involving Spouses

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

"Consider training for ministry spouses because the biggest strain in ministry could be at home. Not being on the same page due to one growing and being stretched while the other is not only adds to the strain and frustration."

"I know that we did this when we first met all of the participants. But have at least one local workshop where the spouses attend, being able to focus on that area of ministry. There was so much talk about balance and family and TRULY trying to evaluate yourself, but in my opinion it would have been more beneficial to have one workshop or even just one day where our spouses could have been there later in the Initiative, after getting to know the foundation of the program. Even now, being alumni, a local workshop doing the same. The area of marriage and ministry and the balance between the two affected me personally because it was in the process when my family was being destroyed. Change was successful but would have been easier if she was able to attend receiving the same training."

Involving Church Leaders

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"Have more involvement from my head pastor somehow through the process of DeVos."

"I believe pastors of participants should be required to participate in a mini-DVULI training."

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

*"Perhaps if DVULI had included the supervisors in the training (if they had been willing, which is a big IF) or if we had been trained/guided in making necessary transitions from one ministry to another, perhaps I would not be experiencing the wilderness time that I am. Perhaps this wilderness time was in God's overall plan and I will be here until he feels that I am adequately prepared for something else." *(portions of this quote also appeared in an earlier section)*

"One suggestion I have is that DVULI would have at least two meetings with the pastoral staff of DVULI members. In those meetings, give them short summaries of the concepts and teachings that are being taught to their ministry leaders. Hopefully with some knowledge coming from the DVULI Family Pastors and Ministry Leaders will hopefully better understand the benefit and the amazing resources being poured into their leaders and also into their own ministry."

Change Curriculum to Address...

This minor theme represents 1.3% of the total responses and includes graduates' suggestions for accommodating bi-vocational workers and catering to specific church ministry structures or different denominations.

Graduation Years 1998 - 2000

"The only thing I know that would have been helpful is the acknowledgement of more bi-vocational work."

"DVULI may need to go more in depth in dealing with urban-suburban ministry relationships and partnerships."

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"They also do not place enough training for parachurch ministries. They have even had guest speakers who have spoken out against parachurch organizations... which leaves those who are part of the parachurch community feeling like they don't fit and are not accepted as a viable ministry."

Miscellaneous Suggestions

These suggestions did not fit into a specific theme. While these suggestions are important they did not receive agreement from multiple people.

Graduation Years 1998 - 2000

"I think it was done in a practical manner but it does take years to walk out."

"I believe each city should be required to do a collaborative project."

"Maybe something to do differently is to role play awhile with each other as one person tries to explain what they have learned to the local city group, then the city group attempts to act like the volunteers in the ministry to see how it got across in order to attempt somewhat of a transfer of that information."

"I think the only thing that can be done differently is yet to be determined. Within the Latino/Hispanic Christian community there is little awareness of this type of Holistic Solutions. As DVULI continues to be a presence [through successful/healthy alumni] in our area, there will be greater measures of marked success and progress. In brief, YOU GOTTA KEEP ON BRINGING IT! And I have no doubt that we will."

"I think that more work could have been done on the system thinking module. At the time that we took it I was not sure how to apply what I had learned. Over the years I have learned this from other people who I know understand it much better than I did."

"I would suggest besides just sending the guide to discuss ways of presenting the material to your ministry."

Graduation Years 2001 - 2003

"In terms of things that could have been done differently, I would love to see more pastors take a lead role in the DVULI training and a commitment to stay in touch with others in the initiative."

"I don't believe DVULI could have done anything different. The only thing that comes to mind since this question is being asked is has any consideration been given to a name change."

"I'm not sure what DVULI could have done differently . . . I wish our group was more cohesive and mutually supportive . . . it had definite cliques that broke down the support structure."

"I have really tried to force the issue of the DVULI coming to Seattle and having their first class because I believe it is a valuable tool that the city hasn't seen and could benefit greatly from."

"I think they could provide more funding to the ministries they partner with."

Graduation Years 2004 - 2005

"DVULI did address it and I tried to convey it to them, but I got no response. DEAD LEADERSHIP needs to be revived and resuscitated! No joke!!!!"

"One thing that DVULI could have done differently is have us end at a different time other than May. The summer is a time when people go off in all different directions and it becomes more natural to be isolated for the next three months. DVULI could have also given us more focused direction for what is next and even put a time limit on applying for some of the collaboration grants. One other thing that might be done is to establish learning communities towards the end of the training and ask people to be part of one as an ongoing commitment."

"The yearly conferences have been helpful, but maybe if we had a web based blog or place that we could communicate to each other. I think this would work pretty good in keeping in touch."

"I wish there was a way to validate this training with something more concrete."

"If DVULI could have honed in a little more on what one or two things we could have implemented, the process may have been less overwhelming."

"Systems change"

"I believe they should meet with city leaders to let them know the investment that is being made to improve their city."

Graduating Year ??

"I think a DVD or CD giving a refresher course of topics we covered would be helpful."

"I believe in it wholeheartedly, but don't believe that much of the collaborative projects presented benefit urban kids or urban communities. DVULI could have had better presenters on this value- those that did talked theoretically but did not have good real life examples."

Summary

The Alumni Survey asked graduates to *"Please briefly describe: 1) the most frustrating challenge you have faced as a result of the DVULI training, and 2) let us know if DVULI could have done something differently to address it"*. This question gave graduates the opportunity to offer practical suggestions for addressing the challenges and frustrations that were described in Chapter 7, *Personal and Ministry Challenges and Frustrations*. It is interesting and important to note that only 36.2% of these comments from graduates were actually suggestions for improvements, while 63.8% of the responses actually took the opportunity to express satisfaction with the program as it existed when they graduated or simply left this second section blank. In total, graduates gave 88 different suggestions for improvements to the program. Suggestions are made in descending order of the number of suggestions in each category.

Two major themes emerged in the coding process. First, some of the graduates felt that, prior to beginning the Initiative, they were ill-prepared for what was in store for them in the training. Others felt that various changes could be made to the curriculum or sequencing of the materials. Most of the graduates that made comments in this area explained that they were transformed in such a significant way that many of them were not adequately prepared for the experience. Most of these comments were made in the early years of the program, leading us to conclude that DVULI staff had already made improvements to most of these areas. That said, we recommend that DVULI staff still consider the suggestions carefully to determine if any additional improvements need to be made in these areas.

A second group of graduates mentioned that they would have benefitted from additional follow-up training after graduation. They asked for help in digesting all that they had learned following the trainings and also requested that DVULI staff link the past graduates to the current graduates to further their networking capabilities. It is clear that DVULI staff already do a number of activities to help graduates refresh their training, including providing graduates with training manuals, maintaining regular communication through newsletters and website, and occasional alumni activities. Graduates are also encouraged to continue meeting in regional groups and sometimes DVULI grant monies have even been provided for this purpose.

That said, DVULI staff may wish to consider if there are any other ways to continue to reinforce training values and skills following graduation.

Four minor themes emerged from the coding as well. First, graduates made various suggestions for the Initiative to provide better training on how to take DVULI information back to their home cities and train others in these principles. Second, some graduates made suggestions for specific topics they wanted to see included in the curriculum, including the integration of more spiritual content. Third, several graduates made suggestions to include spouses or their church leaders in DVULI training so they could minimize stress at home and help others church leaders to better understand the transforming qualities of the Initiative's values and skills. Finally, graduates made a number of miscellaneous suggestions that did not fit any particular theme but which DVULI staff may wish to consider when making future improvements to the program.

*Please note that a summary of all recommendations from the entire document will be provided in the Executive Summary section of this report.

Chapter 12

The DeVos Experience

Because of the intensity, quality, and relational nature of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative, many graduates began referring to ‘the DeVos Experience’ when trying to describe aspects of the program that included but also went beyond leadership training. As a result, we included an open-ended question in the DVULI Alumni Survey that asked graduates the following question: *“When you hear the phrase, ‘the DeVos experience’, what comes to mind? Please write a short phrase or sentence.”*

A total of 271 graduates, representing 100% of the respondents, answered this multi-faceted question using brief words, phrases, or short sentences. Many respondents were unable to restrict themselves to a single comment or thought, resulting in multiple phrases within the majority of responses. Once researchers completed the sorting process that allowed multi-part responses to be separated and counted in multiple locations, a total of 472 comments were coded within this question. Researchers divided responses into nine major themes, with most themes having minor themes included under the major theme.

This same question was also asked at the end of each of the case study interviews so readers can refer to each of these stories to gain a more detailed picture of how ‘the DeVos Experience’ impacted ten graduates on a personal level.

Life Enhancement and Change

This major theme is very personal in nature describing the DeVos experience in terms of the impact the DVULI training had on graduates’ lives. There were 166 responses that fit into this theme, totaling 35.2% of the responses. This theme had, by far, the highest number of responses. Within this theme, the graduates described the long-lasting, life changing, transforming, and rejuvenating way that the initiative impacted their lives.

The graduates spoke of the DeVos experience as an unexpected opportunity, a rewarding and challenging experience as well as a life-changing and educational point in their lives. They also commented on how the experience helped redirect their lives and ministries. The following comments illustrate how the graduates more broadly described their life-enhancing and life-changing experiences.

“Unexpected opportunity to be blessed and bless.”

“Life changing experience that has enhanced my personal and professional life.”

“It radically began a process of re-directing my life and ministry.”

"Should be mandatory for all God's ministers on earth."

Change and Transformation

The first minor theme that emerged included comments regarding graduates' experiences of change and transformation in their lives and ministry as a result of the Initiative. It was a time of personal growth and transparency before others. Some graduates commented on their experience of being treated with respect and appreciation and on experiences of transformative learning and growth with other graduates and DVULI staff.

"The training and experience I received with a group of my ministry peers from my city; being transparent before others..."

"Life-changing opportunity to impact the world around me in revolutionary ways."

"An amazing and affirming, sustained period of profound learning and self-reflection. Life transforming."

"The one word that comes to mind is TRANSFORMATION."

Personal and Ministerial Blessings

A second minor theme that emerged as graduates discussed the DeVos experience was that of the blessings received personally and in ministry as a result of participating in the training. Graduates said that their experience with DeVos was humbling and an incredible blessing. It strengthened their drive for both personal and ministry growth. They also commented on how it challenged them and helped them to grow professionally.

"An incredible blessing and learning experience which is humbling to think I had the opportunity to participate. There is an attachment to my energy and drive for the betterment of my ministry and calling."

"A positive experience that challenged me and helped me grow both personally and professionally."

"When I hear the phrase 'the DeVos experience' it reminds me of blessing and knowledge."

"HOW SWEET IT IS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Longevity of Impact

Graduates' comments were also related to the longevity of impact experienced as a result of the DeVos Initiative. It seemed that not only were the newer youth workers impacted by this training but also those who had been in the ministry for many years. Even those who were considered the most knowledgeable about the topics presented were impacted in a profound way and considered the training as having a life-long influence on their personal and professional lives.

"An opportunity for personal growth that lasts a lifetime."

A rewarding, challenging learning endeavor that can sustain your ministry and life."

"A very broadening experience that I will never forget and always share with others."

Life and Ministry Rejuvenation

Some of the graduates' comments suggested life and ministry rejuvenation. Some described themselves as burned out or on the verge of burning out. The DeVos training emerged as a refreshing experience and it seemed to change the way that they lived their lives and pushed them to become better people.

"Wow...God resurrected my belief that He called me to ministry."

"The DeVos experience was like a breath of fresh air to me."

"Revolutionary in my life and ministry path. It freed me from ideas, habits and fears that were holding me back."

"Life changing, challenging and refreshing!"

Fun

The last minor theme in this section was related to fun. The graduates not only thought that the DeVos experience was life changing and mind altering, but they thought it was fun as well. This is an important aspect since challenging learning experiences are more readily absorbed when they are enjoyable. Fun also relates to the value of balance, which encourages graduates to recreate with others as a means of physical, mental, and social rejuvenation and bonding.

"Great memories of mind altering events. It was so life changing! And Fun!"

"Fun, friends, fellowship, and great learning."

“Quality learning, fun-filled experience, nurturing, commitment to excellence.”

“La Familia joking.”

Fellowship and Hospitality

The second-most common response from graduates involved various aspects of fellowship and hospitality. DVULI graduates commented regularly about the people they met, the meaningful relationships they developed, and positive way they were treated by staff and trainers throughout the Initiative. These comments were related to both the staff and trainers and other DVULI graduates. A total of 17.4%, or 82 of the responses fit into this theme. The following are examples of some of the graduates’ more general responses:

“Excellent training and fantastic fellowship with awesome people from around the country.”

“I think of time of learning and meeting some wonderful people.”

“A family of people who have the same goal, we’re just all working in different ways to reach it!”

Interaction with DVULI Staff and Trainers

The first minor theme in this section related to the interactions between graduates and the DVULI staff and trainers. Graduates repeatedly talked about the quality of the staff and trainers and the importance of their contribution in helping them develop personally and professionally.

“Training on how to maximize the impact your youth ministry has in your inner-city community. The training was experienced in an intimate setting with some of the top experts in the field...”

“I think of the exposure to great trainers who continue to influence my thinking and leadership development.”

“Tears, love, relationships, bonding, family, training; the ultimate life-changing experience.”

Hospitality and Care by DVULI Staff and the DeVos Family

A second similar theme specifically related to the hospitality and care shown by the DVULI staff and the DeVos family throughout the program. One of the Initiatives’ unique characteristics is that the staff provided participants with a series of experiences that they will never forget. Graduates reported that they felt loved and appreciated throughout their time

with the Initiative. Such comments provide insight into the graduates' experiences with DVULI and demonstrate that the Initiative provided them with high quality service and a supportive experience. The following are typical examples of several respondents' comments:

"The DeVos experience means people investing in me and spending time with me and lavishing me and caring about me just to unselfishly see me grow and flourish and become all that God intended. The agenda was about helping me be whole. Unselfish is the word that keeps coming to my mind regarding the people and the process."

"Being cared for in such a loving and 'filling' way."

"Experiencing community, challenge, new learning and concepts, being well cared for and appreciated, not feeling alone."

"Quality care and training."

After further analyzing the responses related to hospitality experienced by the graduates, several related sub-themes involving appreciation of the food provided and the caring qualities of the staff and DeVos family and gratitude for the staff and the DeVos Family.

Appreciation of Food. Good food and was an important aspect that a number of graduates mentioned. Because food often provides the context for fellowship, it is important that people enjoy the food as a positive catalyst to bonding with each other. One person made a powerful parallel between the physical and spiritual dimensions of food.

"Friends, food, fellowship."

"Food! – in a physical and spiritual way, and in both we get FULL."

Caring Qualities of the Staff and DeVos Family. A second sub-theme theme related to the caring qualities of the staff and DeVos family. The staff and DeVos family played an important role in the lives and hearts of the DeVos graduates, ministering on physical, mental, social, and spiritual levels.

"A great group of people who took the time to invest in me and the kingdom and change my life. They gave the tools to do what was in my heart and not in my head."

"A great blessing. I felt honored that someone would make that kind of investment in me. The tools, skills, etc. were fantastic, but the relationships with the staff and my community were even more valuable."

"...the generosity of the DeVos family."

Gratitude for the Staff and the DeVos Family. A related sub-theme was the sense of gratitude that many graduates felt toward the staff and the DeVos family. One person was particularly grateful that the opportunity was made available to low income applicants.

"A positive experience that I am extremely grateful for."

"One of the greatest opportunities ever afforded to me, and I am very thankful."

"I am so grateful for the training and the network."

"...the uniqueness of it being available to low income applicants who are striving in ministry in urban settings."

Relationships Formed by DVULI Graduates

The second minor theme described the relationships that were formed between DVULI graduates.

"Brilliant combination of family building and learning."

"The honesty and vulnerability each participant showed allowed me to take a risk to grow personally and in my ministry."

"Meeting and working with a wonderfully diverse group of people all interested in helping at-risk youth."

"A family of people who have the same goal, we're just all working in different ways to reach it!"

"A band of brothers."

"And we might only see each other once a year but we, you know it's like we've never parted kind of thing. There is that trust that is so deep that you just jump right back in and for those who may not be doing right, you can confront in a second and they know they are going to listen to you because of the connection that we have."

Overall Content of the Program

Eighty graduates, representing 16.9% of the total responses, were related to the overall content and quality of the program. The issues that were mentioned are at the very heart of the DVULI curriculum, such as the process of networking and the empowerment experienced by the graduates. The graduates also described an experience that was rich in fellowship with people from many different places and backgrounds as well as different regions and cities allowing

them to network with likeminded individuals. The graduates also mentioned that their lives were redirected and they felt uplifted personally as a result of the DeVos experience. The following are some examples from the graduates' general responses within this theme.

"...conducted with a high level of excellence."

"A high quality experience. A great time of discovery and learning. An experience that has definitely helped to shape me as a leader. Being part of 'the DeVos experience' has been incredible."

"A time that was very special to me in building me up and to connect other like-minded people, as well as great training and fellowship."

"The DeVos experience was one of the most beneficial training experiences I have participated in. It radically began a process of redirecting my life and ministry. I would not be where I am today without the DeVos experience."

DeVos Values and Skills

This major theme was identified by 70 graduates, representing 14.8% of the total comments. As graduates reflected on the DeVos Experience, they described the concepts and principles they appreciated learning most. Most graduates talked generally about the core values and the breakthrough plan as key components of the Initiative, while others mentioned specific values and skills that were particularly important to them. Examples include:

"When I hear 'the DeVos Experience' I think of the five core values."

"...the core values that make sense to me now."

"Learning and applying the core values..."

"Balance, empowerment, leverage."

"The breakthrough plan. It forced me to see what is really important to me for ministry."

"Intense training, breakthrough planning."

Three minor themes emerged that were related to more general DeVos principles and processes: 1) leadership skills, 2) trusting the process, and 3) community building/networking.

Leadership Skills

Leadership training and skills were mentioned by a large number of graduates. These comments were generally quite generic and included comments such as:

“Excellent leadership development program.”

“Leadership learning in the context of relationships and community.”

“The DeVos Experience equals leadership development and training.”

Trusting the Process

A number of graduates also specifically mentioned the important phrase ‘Trust the process’. This phrase emerged early in the Initiative in response to participants’ confusion on how all the different elements of the training fit together, as well as confusion around how training in values and skills of leadership would benefit their ministries. DVULI leaders asked that participants trust them and the training process enough to believe that the outcome would benefit their ministries in long run.

“Trust the Process!”

“Trust the Process, but also I think of being invited into a group of people who are standing by me to help me make a positive change in my life, both during the time of DVULI and after.”

Community Building/Networking

The final minor theme involved the importance of community building and networking, elements which helped to connect and cement the values and skills. This was considered by a number of graduates to be a key element in the overall success of the DeVos Experience.

“A positive personal and community building experience.”

“Community building God’s way.”

“Learning and growing community.”

Enhancing Ministry

This major theme was identified by 34 graduates, representing 7.2% of the total comments. Enhancing ministry relates to the role that the DeVos Experience played in improving the

quality and capacity for holistic ministry. Comments were further broken up into two minor themes: 1) growing faith and 2) spiritual praise.

Growing Faith

The first minor theme, growing faith, is essential in the development of any spiritual leader. One of DVULI's goals is to lead individuals to be more grounded in their beliefs and this theme illustrates this process.

"Great faith experience inter-woven with valuable leadership learning."

"An exceptional investment in me as I learn to be a better minister of the Gospel."

"...renewed passion to serve Christ..."

"...ministry empowering...."

Spiritual Praise

The second minor theme that emerged as graduates described how the DeVos experience enhanced their ministry was that of spiritual praise. An individual's response to God's purpose and plan for their life is a critical decision most of the graduates have had to make at one point or another in their lives. The spiritual praise theme represents the individual's response to God. The following are examples of some of the statements made:

"Awesome God! Full of impact and power."

"Life changing...when God can get your attention and keep it."

"A transformative experience that propels one forward to impact the Kingdom of God in new ways and at new levels."

Sense of Accomplishment

This major theme was identified by 34 graduates, representing 7.2% of the total comments. This sense of accomplishment was related to activities and changes that occurred following graduation that had been inspired by the DeVos experience.

"Knowing that you have accomplished something and are ready to take on any task."

The graduates' responses related to a sense of accomplishment were further divided into two minor themes. Graduates experienced a sense of accomplishment related specifically to: 1) personal growth and 2) mastering the challenging program content.

Personal Growth

Responses within the minor theme personal growth demonstrated ways in which the graduates saw their lives grow and change as a result of the skills and knowledge they acquired from DVULI.

"Solid core training, hard work, but more than worth what you put into it."

"Passionate, exhausting, challenging growth experience."

"A high quality experience. A great time of discovery and learning."

Mastering the Challenging Program Content

Some graduates experienced a sense of accomplishment when they were able to master the challenging program content of the Initiative. Sometimes the challenge was related to facing one's own personal issues and struggling through them with openness and honesty.

"Long and hard but very great."

"Extensive writing and very mind and personal thought challenging."

"Struggle, stretching, growth, endurance."

"Challenging and revealing. I say this because it was very challenging in every aspect and revealing because the tools that are used cause you to be open and honest."

Purpose and Mission

Twenty-three graduates, representing 4.9% of the total responses, made statements that addressed how the DeVos experience helped them find and maintain their purpose and mission. These responses had a tendency to be broad and make general, non-specific comments about the overall DeVos experience. Most of the comments in this major theme centered around what the DeVos experience enabled them to do for other people and how the experience gave them the tools to be able to help those that really needed it. Responses that fell into this theme include:

"I thought of an innovative and very THOUGHTFUL program that considers the most unique needs of those who are MOST VULNERABLE in ministry."

"Equipping people for the work of the ministry."

"A much needed form of encouragement that came to me in the midst of my ministry."

Miscellaneous

Several comments could not be adequately coded because they were too brief or didn't fit within the existing categories for analysis. A total of 14 responses were coded in this category, representing only 3.3% of the total responses. Examples included "Broken city", "Jimi Hendrix", "Do over", and "I'm not alone".

Summary

The DeVos Experience was described as an almost universally positive experience for those who participated in DVULI training. The overall tone and flavor of these comments was one of warmth, gratitude, enthusiasm, and satisfaction. Participants described feeling loved, pampered, and made to feel special throughout their experience. It is abundantly clear that the Initiative was more than just a training program – it was a challenging, transformative, and rejuvenating experience that was powerful and life-changing in its impact. The experience was dramatically enhanced by the warmth and generous hospitality of the staff and DeVos family, but was also shaped by the intense and lifelong relationships that developed as a result of the Initiative. While again keeping in mind that graduates who never completed the survey may have had some negative experiences, the dramatic lack of negative comments on the part of virtually all of those who completed the survey is an amazing tribute to the program, the staff, its trainers and the entire DeVos family.

APPENDIX A

DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative ALUMNI SURVEY (condensed)

Personal Improvement

DVULI training has:

- Q8 –Prepared me for leadership in my community
- Q9 –Improved my attitudes about ministry
- Q10 –Identified my core values for ministry
- Q11 –Led me to act in greater harmony with my core values
- Q12 –Increased my self-confidence in my ministry and leadership abilities

DVULI training improved how I care for my:

- Q 13 –Physical needs
- Q14 –Mental and intellectual needs
- Q15 –Social needs
- Q 16 –Family needs
- Q17 –Spiritual needs

DVULI training strengthened my:

- Q18 –Personal faith
- Q19 –Relationship to a local faith community
- Q20 –Commitment to the faith-based mission of my organization
- Q21 –Broad based and holistic vision of evangelism

Core Values

I practice:

- Q22 –Accountability
- Q23 –Balance
- Q24 –Empowerment
- Q25 –Interdependence
- Q26 –Leverage

Breakthrough Skills

I practice:

- Q29 –Personal Assessment
- Q30 –Ministry Assessment
- Q31 –Asset Mapping
- Q32 –Scenario Planning
- Q33 –Systems Thinking
- Q34 –Resource Networking
- Q35 –Collaboration

Vision and Mission

DVULI training helped me develop a clear vision and mission for:

- Q38 –My personal mission
- Q39 –My organization or ministry
- Q40 –My local community
- Q41 –My city or metro area

My vision and mission are being accomplished for:

- Q42 –My personal mission
- Q43 –My organization or ministry
- Q44 –My local community
- Q45 –My city or metro area

Breakthrough Plan

Regarding my Breakthrough Plan:

- Q46 –I implemented my Plan
- Q47 –I achieved my Plan's goals

My Breakthrough Plan:

- Q48 –Was a useful exercise for future planning
- Q49 –Had a lasting impact on my ministry

Community Involvement

DVULI training has led me to greater involvement in:

- Q51 –Cross denominational activities
- Q52 –Broad ministry networks
- Q53 –Community development activities
- Q54 –Political and civic affairs
- Q55 –Volunteer work in my community

Ongoing Challenges

Have you faced any of the following challenges as a result of your DVULI training?

- Q76 –I experience challenges when explaining to colleagues, friends and family what the DVULI training was/is
- Q77 –I am personally confused and frustrated about which direction to take my life and ministry
- Q78 –I experience resistance to the DVULI ideas and concepts when trying to share them with ministry and work superiors
- Q79 –I experience resistance to the DVULI ideas and concepts when trying to share them with others in my sphere of influence (peers, staff, volunteers, youth)
- Q80 –It has been a challenge remaining with my current ministry or place of

- employment
- Q81 –I have experienced a challenge transitioning from one place of ministry work to another
- Q82 –I have found it difficult to change my thinking in order to apply the DVULI ideas to my life and ministry
- Q83 –I have experienced difficulty applying the DVULI training concepts to real-life ministry situations

Vocational Impact

DVULI training has helped me:

- Q85 –Stay involved in ministry
- Q86 –Improve my job performance
- Q87 –Earn a better position
- Q88 –Increase my personal income
- Q89 –Improve my job satisfaction
- Q90 –Earn the respect of supervisors
- Q91 –Earn the respect of colleagues

Community Impact

In a typical six-month period, about how many:

- Q56 –Youth did you minister to Before DVULI training?
- Q57 –Youth did you minister to After DVULI training?
- Q58 -Individuals have you mentored (sustained personal meetings) in leadership development?
- Q59 –Individuals have you trained (workshops, events, etc.)?
- Q60 -DVULI graduates do you communicate with in a typical month?
- Q61 -Community projects or ministry activities with DVULI graduates in your city have you participated in?
- Q62 –Organizations have you partnered with to provide ministry or service?
- Q63 –Community projects or ministry activities with other organizations in your city have you joined?
- Q64 –Projects or programs have you developed?
- Q65 –Grants have you helped to bring into your or others' organizations? Do not include DVULI funding.
- Q66 -About how many dollars have you helped raise in grants and or donations as a result of DVULI training?

Average Hours per Week Worked

Average weekly:

- Q93a- Youth ministry – Paid
- Q93b - Youth ministry – Volunteer
- Q94a - Other ministry – Paid
- Q94b - Other ministry – Volunteer

DVULI Participation

In which city did you participate in DVULI?

- 1 Birmingham, AL
- 2 Boston, MA
- 3 Chicago, IL
- 4 Grand Rapids/Holland, MI
- 5 Orlando, FL
- 6 Paterson, NJ
- 7 Phoenix, AZ
- 8 San Antonio, TX
- 9 San Diego, CA
- 10 Kansas City, KS/MO
- 11 Albuquerque, NM
- 12 Detroit, MI
- 13 Memphis, TN
- 14 Philadelphia, PA
- 15 Denver, CO
- 16 Houston, TX
- 17 Los Angeles, CA
- 18 Portland, OR
- 19 Pittsburgh, PA
- 20 Indianapolis, IN