



CMBA Partnership with CIU Benefits Churches, Students

CMBA has entered into an official agreement with Columbia International University (CIU) in a partnership that benefits churches and both current and prospective students. It is the first such partnership the school has created with an association. The Christian university located on Monticello Road was founded in 1923 and draws thousands of students each year pursuing undergraduate, graduate and theological degrees. The institution has several partnerships within the community with like-minded faith-based organizations and businesses, and is looking to provide new ministry and educational experiences through its partnership with CMBA.

CIU Assistant Director of Corporate Outreach, Romy Nos, is looking forward to the CMBA partnership, noting that CIU is often called the best kept secret in Columbia.

“If you have experienced the CIU culture and our school, you are familiar with the tremendous impact we have through students and alumni serving around the world,” Nos said. “The opportunity to impact the local community through this partnership is exciting, and we’d love to share our story and encourage folks to pursue a biblically-based Christian education.”

The partnership represents several big opportunities to members of the CMBA Family of Churches. Prepared students will be matched with congregations requesting their help in meeting ministry and leadership needs at the local church level. These churches, in turn, offer some supervision and experiential support to the students serving there. CIU is also offering financial aid opportunities to prospective students from CMBA member churches.

The tuition discount incentive applies to members and staff of active CMBA churches who enroll in undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs at CIU. Part-time undergraduate students can be eligible for a \$250 discount per semester, with a \$500 total per school year. Full-time students are eligible for twice that amount, with a \$500 discount per semester totaling \$1,000 per school year. Qualifying educational programs may be found [here](#).

Because CMBA is an official CIU partner, the CIU website application for church staff or members includes a place to note the applicant’s relationship with a CMBA affiliated church, ensuring the partnership discount rate is applied toward enrolling in online or regular classes.

Nos says the partnership goes beyond the discount, as CIU desires to give back in as many ways as possible. He cites regular community service days and “worship night” packages in addition to grant opportunities that make college more accessible for many prospective students. Information on the Church Partners program may be found at <https://www.ciu.edu/church-relations>.

According to One Priority Mobilizer Robbie McAlister, this partnership reflects a culmination of several CMBA goals and strategies, including congregational expression expansion and creating and building a leadership pipeline in new and existing churches. This idea lends itself to natural relationship building moving forward with Baptist higher education institutions in the state – North Greenville, Anderson and Charleston Southern Universities – along with CIU, in closest proximity to the Midlands.

Among other local CIU connections is Dr. Andre Rogers who directs CIU’s Doctor of Ministerial Leadership program. He is also a CMBA Mobilizer, a member of the Visionary Leadership Community,

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and pastor of Concord Fellowship Church. Also, CIU President Dr. Mark Smith is a member of Shandon Baptist Church, while McAlister holds two degrees from CIU and serves as president of the school's Alumni Association.

"We discovered the partnership potential recognizing that CIU has a service learning requirement as part of the undergraduate and seminary programs that is designed to connect students with local churches. The mutual goal is to provide onramps for students to connect with churches well before they graduate so they can build relationships for future opportunities. This is especially exciting given the school's proximity combined with the financial assistance potential for students seeking a quality theological education and the potential to create future staff and members in our churches," McAlister says.

CMBA churches interested in being matched with a CIU student should contact McAlister, who will gather some basic information and then connect the church with James McCall, director of CIU Christian Service Learning. McCall has a list of students ready to put their knowledge and passions into service in the local setting. Because CMBA is an official partner with CIU, there is also a place on the university's website for church staff or members to visit to learn more about enrolling in online or regular classes at www.ciu.edu/church-relations.

For his part, McAlister believes this partnership is occurring at a perfect time because "when we can have confidence both in the churches that are part of our association fulfilling God's plan for them and the institutions that are training and educating future church leaders, then we know and have hope that we have a strong future in our ever-increasingly secular society."

To date, Concord Fellowship, Cedar Creek, First Baptist Winnsboro, Crossroads, North Trenholm and Riverbend churches have engaged with CIU through the partnership. CMBA churches may contact McAlister for additional information by email at robertmcalister57@gmail.com or by phone at 803.315.2741. McCall may be reached by phone at 800.777.2227.