

University Bible Fellowship Church

of State College, Pennsylvania

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Memorandum for: Pastor Ron Ward

From: Joe Schafer

Subject: Creation of an External Advisory Committee

Last month, on our trip to the CrossGlobal Link conference, we discussed the idea of convening an External Advisory Committee for UBF. At your request, I have put these ideas in writing so that you may share and discuss them with other UBF leaders. In preparing this document, I have also received helpful input from Dr. Mark Yoon.

What is an External Advisory Committee? An External Advisory Committee (EAC) is a group of individuals who do not belong to an organization but who understand the organization's goals and are sympathetic to them. Members of the EAC are recognized as experts in their field and are knowledgeable in how similar organizations operate. They meet periodically with leaders and key members to provide encouragement and guidance on whatever issues the organization chooses to set before them. Their recommendations, which are nonbinding, are typically submitted to the organization as a brief written report.

What is the motivation for convening an EAC? Many organizations recognize that it is healthy and even essential to occasionally receive fresh advice from the outside. Friends who are familiar with an organization but who are not part of its day-to-day operation will often see things that the leaders and members do not see. They are free to speak their minds and offer counsel in an impartial manner. Their recommendations can help to motivate an organization to make improvements. Secular institutions recognize the value of EAC's, and most large churches and ministries do as well.

Why am I writing to you about this? Because I have some experience with EAC's. Most academic departments at major universities convene an EAC every few years to review aspects of the Department and give a report to the Dean. In my own research center at Penn State, we have convened EAC's on at least four occasions, and each time the experience was very helpful in ways that we did not expect. I have also served on EAC's for several federal statistical agencies. From either side, participating in an EAC was very rewarding.

Why should UBF consider creating an EAC at this time? This has been a landmark year

for our ministry. We received accreditation from the ECFA, were reinstated by the NAE and became a member of CrossGlobal link. By these important steps, we have been forging relationships with other parts of the Body of Christ. It is now incumbent upon us to demonstrate that these steps were not merely a public-relations campaign to improve our standing in the eyes of human beings. We ought to have meaningful interaction with knowledgeable and sympathetic Christian leaders who can encourage us, instruct us, pray for us and learn from us. In certain respects, we have been doing this already. By attending meetings and conferences sponsored by EMS, CrossGlobal Link, Kimnet, etc. we have been networking with Christian leaders. In a conference environment, however, it is difficult to engage these leaders in frank, sustained, and confidential dialogue that is focused on issues specific to our ministry. An EAC is one mechanism by which we can interact with them in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Benefits of convening an EAC

- Increases transparency and accountability in a ministry, especially among its leaders.
- Provides concrete evidence that our ministry is maturing and that we are continually trying to reforming ourselves to better conform to the will of Christ.
- The EAC can raise issues with leaders that our ministry's members may be reluctant to bring up themselves, because of issues of seniority and power distance.
- An EAC may help our leaders to make tough decisions. Change can be difficult, especially when members of our ministry have different points of view. Recommendations from an EAC can help to build consensus within the ministry, strengthen the hands of our leader to implement changes, and give members of our ministry greater confidence that these changes are necessary and beneficial.

Does the EAC need to meet regularly?

No. Some organizations have a standing EAC with regular members that meets every year. But that is not always helpful. In my view, it's better to decide what issues are most important to discuss and then convene an ad hoc EAC that can provide expert advice on those specific areas. I've found that it's much easier to get prominent leaders to agree to serve on an ad hoc committee just once, without asking them to commit to a long term of service. After attending and having a positive experience, they may be willing to do it again in the future.

Who should serve on the EAC?

The EAC should be a small group of, say, 3-5 persons. They should be trustworthy and discreet. The majority should be Christian leaders who are already familiar with our ministry, and one of those can serve as the Committee Chair. It may also be beneficial to bring in one or two people who do not know us well but with whom we would like to foster a good

relationship.

For example, I have heard that leaders in the Moody Church have an unfavorable opinion of UBF, and that they have a file about us filled with old information supplied by anti-UBF individuals and the Cult Awareness Network. They are not inclined to change their opinion of us, because they don't have the time or inclination to investigate us properly; it is simply not a high priority for them. Suppose we were to invite a prominent leader from the Moody Church to serve on an EAC. Most likely, he would feel honored. He would be impressed by our openness and willingness to solicit his advice. He would get to know us personally and would hear the balanced opinions of other EAC members. If he were to see us taking his viewpoint seriously, then it is quite likely that his opinion of us would change, and the opinions of other leaders in the Moody Church would also change. (Here I am using the Moody Church only as an example of an important ministry whose leaders do not know us very well. Other examples may include Navigators, IVCF, etc.)

What, exactly, would the EAC do? The EAC would visit the UBF headquarters for a short period time, say, 2 ½ days. After receiving an orientation from us, they would have a series of meetings with different groups of individuals in UBF—the General Director, representatives from the Senior Staff, the Board of Elders, fellowship leaders, directors of large chapters, directors of small chapters, interns, growing disciples, 2nd gens, and new Bible students. These meetings would be confidential, held in a setting where people can freely express themselves without feeling threatened in any way. After gathering information in this way, the EAC would go into “Executive Session” where they would hold private discussions among themselves, develop recommendations, and perhaps even draft their report. Because of the spiritual nature of the EAC's mission, it would also be very appropriate to set aside time for UBF members and the EAC to pray, worship and have fellowship together at the Chicago Center, perhaps on the second evening of their meeting.

Possible steps for convening an EAC

1. Define the EAC's mission. Formulate a short list of topics that we want them to address. The more specific, the better. It may be good to ask their advice on some pressing business matters that our ministry is struggling with right now. But it's also good to ask them to look into some larger, long-term issues that we will face in the years ahead. A mixture of short-term and long-term issues is appropriate.
2. Set a tentative date for when the EAC will meet.
3. Formulate a list of potential EAC members, and rank them in order of preference. Understand that these individuals are likely to be busy, and some of them will be unable to attend at any given time. If there are persons on the list whom we feel that we absolutely *must* have on the EAC, then contact these persons first, adjusting the dates of the meeting if necessary to accommodate their schedule.
4. It is customary to reimburse EAC members for their travel and to pay them a

- reasonable honorarium for their service. When we issue the formal letter of invitation to a potential EAC member, we should describe the mission and duties of the EAC. Also, at the outset, we should give specific details about the travel arrangements and honorarium. This will help avoid any possible appearance of impropriety (e.g. charges that recommendations of the EAC members were swayed by money).
5. Designate one member of the EAC to serve as the Committee Chair. Work with him ahead of time to set the schedule and agenda for the EAC's visit.
 6. About 2-3 weeks before the EAC meeting, send an informational binder to each EAC member containing travel information, schedule and agenda, and a short document that clarifies the topics to be discussed (the short list of specific questions that they will address in their report). If there are additional documents that can provide background reading for the committee members to help introduce them to our ministry and to the specific issues to be addressed, then those should be included as well. Finally, it is also wise to include two forms that each EAC member should sign and give to us at the start of the meeting: (a) a statement declaring that they have no material conflicts of interest, and (b) a pledge to maintain the confidentiality of individuals within UBF and not disclose sensitive information that we entrust to them in private. These documents will not have any legal force, but they will have significant moral force.
 7. Before the EAC members prepare their report, they will want to know who the audience will be. We want them to be frank and honest. UBF members will really want to see their recommendations. But some of the detailed advice that the EAC may offer could be of a confidential nature, useful for our leaders but not suitable for broad distribution. For this reason, it may be helpful to ask the EAC to write their report in two forms.
 - a. An Executive Summary that lists the general findings and recommendations. This document will be suitable for broad distribution, and can even be posted on our main website. As far as our UBF members and the outside world is concerned, this document will be "the EAC report."
 - b. A document that is intended for key leaders, not for public distribution. This may elaborate on the points listed in the Executive Summary.
 8. Within a reasonable amount of time (say, one month) after the EAC submits its report, UBF leaders may decide to write a document of their own showing how they are responding to each of the EAC's recommendations. This response should be sent to EAC members with a letter of thanks. And we could post this response on our website, alongside the EAC's report.

In conclusion: I am offering this advice simply because you asked me to do so. I hope that

you, Dr. John Jun, and our leaders and elders find it useful. May God bless you and give you wisdom as you continue to serve him and build his church.