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# The Challenge of Change

By F. E. J. Harder

In a sense it is a paradox that Seventh-day Adventists, who tend to be conservative and resistant to change, should operate the largest Protestant educational system in the world, for change is the very essence of education. Of course, some people would use education to prevent change, but this is an abuse of the process—and an exercise in futility. Colleges and universities by their very nature guarantee that change will come to the societies they serve. Our pioneers could have chosen the way of the Amish who turned their backs on change, but that option was closed to this church in August, 1874, when Battle Creek College opened its doors.



Dr. Harder has spent much of his life in Seventh-day Adventist education. His contributions include teaching at the academy and college level, service as a college president, chairman of a college education department, and dean of graduate studies. His experience spans North America and the Middle East. He was elected the first Executive Director of the NAD Board of Higher Education at the church's world headquarters, a position he held for nine years. Though officially retired, he remains active in church educational endeavors, serving on boards and special commissions and offering his expertise in a consulting capacity.

Some colleges and the churches they serve have parted company. Whether the relationship of a college and its sponsoring church continues to be constructive depends to a large degree upon how closely associated and interdependent they remain in philosophy and mission, enrollment of the church's youth, and financial support.

When Seventh-day Adventists launched their educational endeavors, their membership was largely rural. Schools were small. Facilities and equipment were meager. Organizational structures were simple. Because membership was so scattered, secondary schools were of necessity boarding schools. The same was true of public colleges.

Now, with our increasingly urban church membership, day

academies are growing while some boarding academies are being forced to close. At the same time, the availability of public community colleges is increasing. Both of these developments adversely affect the ability of church colleges to attract students. Boarding academies have been the primary source of students for boarding colleges, and the convenience and lower costs of community colleges now attract many students who otherwise would attend church colleges.

Does this mean that our colleges and universities will soon have too few students to function effectively? Not necessarily. A fuller recognition by Seventh-day Adventists of the essential role of Christian education could increase enrollments in church institutions

at all levels by 50 to 75 percent.

An alternative would be to make a few changes in our entrance requirements, student manuals, and recruitment emphases so that we could attract a much larger number of students from non-Adventist backgrounds. These young people have always been welcome, and all of our colleges and universities have some enrolled. However, if in order to fill our dormitories we should restructure our programs *primarily* to attract these students, the nature of our institutions would change in ways that would defeat their purpose for existing. Our colleges are needed for their uniqueness, not for the characteristics they share with other institutions.

During the past four decades our colleges have undergone great changes in size and sophistication. Campuses have been redesigned and old buildings have been replaced. Laboratories, libraries, and other learning facilities have

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been vastly upgraded. Two universities in the United States and several abroad have been established.

Numerous new major programs have been developed and others substantially enhanced. This is particularly true in the fine arts, natural sciences, health sciences, and various technologies. These expensive programs have escalated

costs far out of proportion to the increases in church financial aid. Along with this has come an increased infusion of money from government, private philanthropy, and alumni. The building of endowments, though still in its infancy, is on its way.

The history of church-related higher education in America is very clear in one respect. Whenever the level of financial support from the church becomes insignificant compared with that from non-church sources, the relationship between the church and the college changes, and the college—not the church—determines what that relationship will be! For the

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trustees of our colleges to be blind to this trend or ignore it would be to betray their entrustment.

#### **Government Assistance— and Intrusion**

Other changes have resulted from government intrusion. Prior to World War II the involvement of the Federal Government in higher education consisted almost exclusively of appropriations to the Land Grant colleges under provisions of the Second Morrill Act of 1890. Administration of these grants was handled by two clerks in Washington who mailed the monthly checks.

Changes began at the close of the war with the GI Bill and during the following two decades escalated by numerous congressional acts that made available scholarships and loans to students,

research grants to faculties, equipment grants and long-term building loans to institutions. The regulations governing loans and grants and the bureaucracy that administers them have influenced curricula, hiring practices, admissions standards, and campus governments. They have imposed new costs on institutions by way of

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mandated record keeping, reporting, building modification, and untold hours of professional time spent trouble-shooting in the massive bureaucracy.

Under the clichés of “equal opportunity,” “nondiscrimination,” “no establishment of religion,” “equal rights,” and so forth, governmental intrusion militates against diversity. Unless these pressures are vigorously, continuously, and often painfully withstood, they tend to make each college essentially similar to every other. Our nation does not need private colleges that are just like schools in the public sector. Seventh-day Adventists have no reason to support a public-type church college when they already finance state universities through their tax dollars. Church colleges will receive and deserve patronage only as they remain faithful to their basic goals and prepare their students to serve humanity in harmony with the church’s world mission.

Increased financial support from private and corporate philanthropy, continued assistance from

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almost all of its members are subject to the electoral process at the General Conference session. The staff of the Department of Education looks to this body for direction and guidance in serving the world field as it continues to develop its educational system.

We cannot be blind to the problems and challenges we face—groups of children of SDA hospital employees in Taiwan coming back from school Sabbath morning in their uniforms as members are leaving the church service, thousands of SDA children in formerly SDA schools in Tanzania, expropriation in Burundi and closings in Rwanda, drugs and alcohol in SDA homes and institutions in the Americas, a brain drain from education to health institutions because of wage-scale decisions difficult to recall, non-SDA teachers and students endangering the precarious balance between the outward thrust of evangelism and the inflowing tide of worldliness, or the subtle undermining of faith in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy by “sophisticated intellectuals” whose exposure to the universe has not produced the humility that characterizes truly great minds.

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*As we look across the world of Seventh-day Adventist education, we see certain trends and unique identifying features characterizing different divisions.*

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However, as we study church history and see the way God has led us in the past, we look with confidence to the future, planning as if we had a thousand years and living as if we had only today. □

## **The Challenge of Change** *(Continued from page 14)*

government, and larger enrollments of non-Adventist students are all important to a church college. They can enrich its education, enhance its educators, and enlighten the educated. At the same time, each has the potential of diluting its uniqueness, diffusing its identity, and defeating its purpose.

The church must recognize the magnitude of its dependence on its colleges and universities. It would not long survive as a significant movement should it lose them. The

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spiritual and corporate health of the church and its ability to fulfill its world mission largely depend upon the extent to which its youth receive their education on its college campuses.

### **To Trustees**

The challenge to college trustees is solemn and severe. The constituency trusts you to ensure a balance between the nurture and outreach missions of your college. It was founded to educate young people with a world view that recognizes men and women as children of God, perfectible in character by divine action, and heirs of an eternal destiny through the grace of Jesus Christ. Your college has been supported through the passing

years to prepare students to demonstrate in the world of work at home and abroad that integrity, morality, and faith can generate the best possible life-style plus a confident hope for an infinitely finer existence beyond our present reach.

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### **To the Faculty**

The challenge to the faculty is no less serious, for to you is committed the task of shaping instruction to meet institutional goals. When your teaching becomes so absorbed in preparing students for the world of work that nurturing their appreciation of and commitment to spiritual values is neglected, you are detracting from the uniqueness of your college. Conversely, to the extent that you emphasize the religious nurture of your students to the exclusion of their outreach concerns, you risk degrading education into mere indoctrination. In either case you jeopardize the good name, indeed, the survival of your college. The fundamental basis of Christian education demands an integration of learning with the intellectual, religious, physical health, and life service potential of students. To the extent that your curriculum or teaching falls short or lacks balance, it is flawed and inadequate.

### **To the President**

It has been said that a college is the shadow of its president. Mr. President, what sort of shadow do you cast?

Students look to you as the

embodiment of the ideals and principles of your college and as Exhibit A of what the educated Christian ought to be.

The faculty expects from you an understanding of the academic process, leadership toward attainment of institutional goals, intellectual respectability, spiritual inspiration, executive competence, sensitivity to their moods, tolerance of their idiosyncracies, provision for their perceived needs, support for their desired curriculum changes, filling of their most unpopular courses with eager students, and perhaps occasionally

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the ability to heal the sick and raise the dead!

The trustees have entrusted you to speak for them to the institution and its various constituencies. They also expect you to represent the college to them—its faculty and students, its financial status and physical plant, its academic standing and spiritual health—with frankness and integrity. They expect that during your tenure the college will make greater strides toward achievement of its goals than ever before.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church demands that under your

leadership the college will provide higher education of excellent quality with strict adherence to the loftiest standards within a spiritual environment.

The larger society—beginning with your local community and extending around the world—has a right to expect graduates who bring to their tasks not only skills but also breadth of understanding, integrity, dedication, and an orientation toward service rather than self-aggrandizement.

Leaders at all levels need to comprehend the interdependence of the church and its educational institutions. If both are mutually supportive and together follow the guidance of God to accomplish their world mission, the challenges of change will be met with confidence and success. However, we must be aware that potentially irreversible forces are present within both the church and our colleges that must be resolutely countered. If we fail to pursue our challenges in mutual dependence, neither church nor college can hope to succeed in achieving those lofty goals. □

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### **The Future of SDA Higher Education**

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inflation and in comparison with pay scales for comparable work elsewhere.

In a number of disciplines, such as business, computer science, engineering, and some sciences, the Adventist college teacher's pay falls in the *bottom one percentile* of all those in that profession throughout the United States. This situation is aggravated by the fact that Adventist Health Systems typically pay substantially more than our colleges and universities for personnel with the same qual-

ifications, which gives them a strong competitive edge in recruitment and retention.

#### **Is It Worth It?**

With all the problems and uncertainties today, is a Seventh-day Adventist college education really worth it? Let us not forget that despite the sharp enrollment decline and financial difficulties of the past few years, 17,500 students are currently enrolled in NAD colleges. In other words, our colleges still produce hundreds of persons each year to serve the church.

In spite of the difficulties

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*Church subsidies on the whole have not kept up with increasing costs and represent an ever-smaller percentage of the operating budgets on a number of campuses.*

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described above, the colleges and universities of the North American Division graduated nearly 18,000 students with bachelor's degrees and well over 6,000 with associate degrees between 1977 and 1984. These include approximately 1,800 in business administration, 250 in office administration, about 100 in journalism, 1,500 in elementary education, 275 in industrial education, 2,500 in nursing, and almost 2,000 in religion and theology. In addition, approximately 800 completed a master of divinity degree at the Seminary, and Loma Linda University graduated more than 600 dentists and nearly 1,200 physicians.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, where would the church be today without the approximately 90,000 students who have graduated from the North Ameri-