

# TRAINING

## FOR UP-TO-DATE CAREERS IN HOME ECONOMICS

By Merlene Olmsted

**A**cademy-level home economics is in trouble.<sup>1</sup> Tightened curriculum in many academies allows little opportunity for electives. Even in those institutions requiring home economics, students (usually only girls) must take only one semester of the subject. As academy enrollments dwindle, schools are directing their limited financial resources to programs relating to college entrance requirements. As a result, fewer full-time home economics teachers are needed at the secondary level.

Described this way, the picture appears bleak. But in fact the crisis has created a demand at the college/university level for programs leading to a wider variety of careers in the area of home economics. Because the discipline encompasses five broad areas (clothing/textiles, foods/nutrition, housing/interior design, management/consumerism, child/family science), program concentrations need not be limited to teacher preparation.

### Students Want Specialization

Student interest in home economics has become more specialized. A study by Kinsey Green of U.S. public and private institutions found that between 1973 and 1983 there was a 38 percent decrease in home economics education degrees and a 38 percent decrease in general home

economics degrees granted.<sup>2</sup> However, other areas increased dramatically (See Figure 1.)

**Figure 1<sup>3</sup>**  
Increase in Specialties Within Home Economics  
1973-1983

Area	Increase (in Percent)
Home management family economics .....	543
Institution hotel restaurant management .....	123
Food nutrition dietetics .....	78
Textiles clothing merchandising .....	74
Art interior design merchandising .....	67

Green predicts that by another decade 41 percent of undergraduate majors will be in clothing, textiles, and related arts "with the preponderance in fashion merchandising."<sup>4</sup>

A number of factors have helped to reorient home economics curricula

## Examples of Job Opportunities Within Employment Clusters

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL PROFESSIONALS (% SD\* = 70)

Child Care Center Director	Human Resources Develop. Director
Community Services Director	Interior Design Firm Owner/Manager
Consumer Affairs Director	Personnel Manager
Cooperative Extension Services Supervisor	Public Housing Director
Customer Services Manager	Public Relations Director
Educational Services Director	Research Director
Food Service Manager	Restaurant Manager
Fund Development Director	Test Kitchen Manager
Guest Services Manager	University Administrator

### MARKETING, MERCHANDISING, AND FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS (% SD\* = 89)

Buyer	Insurance Agent
Consumer Services Representative	Loan Officer Marketing Researcher
Convention Coordinator	Marketing Specialist
Credit Analyst	Merchandiser
Economist	Product Analyst
Fashion Coordinator	Purchasing Agent
Financial Analyst	Sales Manager
Financial Planner	Technical Sales Representative
Food Broker	

### SCIENTIFIC, DESIGN, AND TECHNICAL PROFESSIONALS (% SD\* = 77)

Apparel Designer	Interior Designer
Conservator	Microbiologist
Consumer Scientist	Nutritional Scientist
Dietitian	Product Designer
Energy Conservation Specialist	Quality Control Analyst
Environmental Analyst	Statistician
Family Science Researcher	Textile Chemist
Food Scientist	Textile Conservator
Home Furnishings Designer	Textile Designer

### INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS (% SD\* = 101)

Commentator	Information Analyst
Computer Systems Analyst	Journalist
Consumer Reporter	Media Specialist
Continuing Education Teacher	Nutrition Educator
Cooperative Extension Services Agent	Parenting Educator
Counselor	Preschool Teacher
Curriculum Specialist	Public Relations Specialist
Editor	Secondary Teacher
Illustrator	University Faculty Member Writer

### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PROFESSIONALS (% SD\* = 96)

Art Therapist	Geriatric Services
Career Counselor	Home Health Care Provider
Child Abuse Case Worker	Marriage and Family Therapist
Child Care Specialist	Nutritionist
Community Development Specialist	Occupational Therapist
Consumer Counselor	Rehabilitation Counselor
Family Financial Counselor	Retirement Housing Specialist
Family Sociologist	Urban Planner
Foster Parent Counselor	Youth Counselor

\* % SD S = supply of graduates  
D = demand (i.e., the number of job openings)

From Jane Coulter, Marge Stanton, Norma Bobbitt, *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the Food and Agricultural Sciences: Home Economics*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1987).

toward career preparation rather than homemaking or teacher education. The work force has changed substantially: among women 18-49 years old about 90 percent have been employed full or part time sometime during the past two years. More than half of mothers with children under six are working.<sup>5</sup>

The emergence of the dual-career family has created a demand for such institutionalized services as fast-food preparation/management and child care program administration.<sup>6</sup> Research and development has created such new technologies as microelectronics, biogenetics, and solar and sea exploration which, in turn, have resulted in new home economics careers with discrete areas of specialization.<sup>7</sup>

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*The crisis in home economics has created a demand at the college/university level for programs that lead to a wider variety of careers in the area.*

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The racial-ethnic shifts in population, particularly evident in the southern United States, and the graying of America will continue to influence future directions in home economics curriculum as well as career possibilities for majors.<sup>8</sup>

The goals of high school students have also shifted. Alexander Astin's annual survey of high school seniors suggests that today's graduates will choose college majors that will provide jobs, preferably those that pay well.<sup>9</sup>

As technological changes escalate, demographic and social changes will continue apace. What kinds of programs can Adventist institutions provide to meet students' and employers' needs and wishes? Because Adventist home economics staffing and departmental resources are limited, I believe, along with Bailey, et al. that "the best education for the future is an education which enables students to adapt to a changing world, rather than preparation for a specific job."<sup>10</sup>

If too highly specialized, college home economics programs become excessively expensive to operate, appeal only to a few students, and quickly become outdated. Therefore, a general home economics core that emphasizes career clus-

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### Annual Employment Opportunities and Available Graduates Through 1995

Family & Community Services Professionals  
**D** = 5200  
**S** = 4967  
**%SD** = 96

Administration & Managerial Professionals  
**D** = 6500  
**S** = 4522  
**%SD** = 70

Information, Communication, & Education  
**D** = 7200  
**S** = 8107  
**%SD** = 101

Marketing, Merchandising, & Financial Professionals  
**D** = 11,000  
**S** = 9750  
**%SD** = 89

Scientific, Design, & Technical Professionals  
**D** = 7200  
**S** = 5654  
**%SD** = 77

**D** = demand (No. of job openings)    Distribution of 37,000 Employment  
**S** = supply of graduates                      Opportunities for Graduates

#### Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Home Economics

##### Summary Report of a National Assessment

Conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture  
 November 1987

ters should provide the kind of broad education that will please both students and employers.

However, retaining a core curriculum that emphasizes healthful living, self-management, self reliance, and control of one's destiny at the family level is necessary to maintain home economics' basic philosophy. It also validates the need for home economics-related majors in Adventist colleges and universities. Career clusters are derived from an accumulation of similar employment opportunities that are categorized under a specific heading.

#### Employment Opportunities Through 1995

According to Coulter's projected employment trends through 1995,<sup>11</sup> job clusters that offer excellent opportunities include Administration and Management; Marketing, Merchandising, and Finances; and scientific, design, and technical areas.

Employment clusters where demand nearly matches the supply of graduates include Information, Communication and Education; and Family and Community Services (See chart, "Annual Employment Opportunities.") Overall, Coulter predicts that jobs will annually exceed trained personnel by 11 percent.<sup>12</sup> For a listing of types of jobs available in each career cluster, see "Examples of Job Opportunities Within Employment Clusters," on page 15.

Coulter's employment clusters are too broad to provide an emphasis for a major. However, by choosing an area relating to one or more clusters, the home economics department can shape requirements for specific majors. For instance, Green<sup>13</sup> predicts student interest to be highest in the area of clothing, textiles, and related arts. Coulter's chart shows that the best demand/supply ratios exist in the areas of

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(1) Administration/Management and (2) Marketing, Merchandising, and Finances. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to devise a home economics major that deals with fashion management or merchandising. The same method could be used to devise programs in food service management, interior design, and other areas.

A major with a core of general home economics classes and emphasis in a specialty area provides the kind of broad education that will enable students to adapt to changing environments and acquire practical Christian living skills. It also prepares them for a variety of careers within a particular cluster. Many of the career opportunities listed by Coulter (See "Examples of Job Opportunities within Employment Clusters") involve business theory. Accordingly, specialization could include business classes. This would result in increased institutional efficiency while providing needed background for home economics majors.

College home economics departments should continue to provide teacher education as an option so that our academies can be staffed with professional home economists. However, the technological, demographic, and social shifts of American society have also made it imperative that new avenues for career development be made available to students. □

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## REFERENCES

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- <sup>2</sup> Kinsey Green, "The Future of Home Economics in Higher Education," *Proceedings at the Joint Conference of the Association of Administrators of Home Economics* (San Francisco, California, February 18-21, 1987), pp. 170-193.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.
- <sup>5</sup> Horst H. Stipp, "What Is a Working Woman?" *American Demographics* 10:9 (July 1988); David E. Bloom and Todd P. Steen, "Why Child Care Is Good for Business," *American Demographics*, 10:8 (August 1988), p. 22.
- <sup>6</sup> Rees, Ezell, and Firebaugh, p. 32.
- <sup>7</sup> Robert Cope, "Planning for the Future Strategically: The Case of Bourbon College of Home Economics," *Proceedings at the Joint Conference of the Association of Administrators of Home Economics and National Council of Administrators of Home Economics* (San Francisco, California, February 18-21, 1987), p. 48; Rees, Ezell, and Firebaugh, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> Cope, p. 49; Victoria Seitz, "Accommodating Adult Learners: Distance Education in Home Economics," *Journal of Home Economics*, 80:2 (Summer 1988), pp. 42-44; Elinor Abramson, "Projections: 2000," *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, 31:3 (Fall 1987), pp. 5-27.

<sup>9</sup> Ardis Young and Bonnie Johnson, "Why Students Are Choosing Home Economics," *Journal of Home Economics*, 78:3 (Fall 1986), pp. 34-38.

<sup>10</sup> L. Bailey, F. Firebaugh, S. Jorgensen, and J. Lillistol, *Strengthening Home Economics Programs in Higher Education* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, 1986), cited in Rees, Ezell, and Firebaugh, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Coulter, Marge Stanton, Norma Bobbitt, *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the Food and Agricultural Sciences: Home Economics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Green, p. 184.

## WORKING AT HOME USING HOME ECONOMICS SKILLS

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4. How will a rate of pay be established? Will the person be able to earn a decent living? What about fringe benefits such as retirement, vacations, and medical insurance? Is the worker sufficiently informed about the business aspects of the job?

5. Will the home need a special location to be designated as the office or workplace? What legal requirements need to be met? How will tax laws affect the home-based business? What government and health regulations apply?

### Productivity

Although working at home may be convenient, there may be some problems:

1. Will isolation from other workers affect the person's productivity and creativity?

2. Does the home worker have sound business acumen and understand the need for planning and risk taking to ensure the success of the business?

3. Will the person miss the intellectual stimulation and socialization that occurs in the typical work setting? Will career development be restricted?

4. If the person has never operated a business before, does he or she understand business folkways, methods of establishing business relationships, or what procedures to take to develop such relationships? Is the person informed about techniques for marketing and advertising?

5. Eighty percent of small businesses fail within the first five years. What impact would failure of the business have on the family?

Most of the issues above can be resolved with training and careful planning. Home-based businesses have the potential to help parents achieve a good living as well as a productive, family-centered life.

### Home-Based Businesses in Developing Countries

Today most countries and international agencies recognize the distinctive and crucial role that the home can play in the development process, with women as major contributors. Home-based businesses have brought great benefits not only to the women concerned, but also to their families and local communities.

According to reports published by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, thousands of poor, often ill-educated women around the world have set up successful home businesses and are earning decent livings.

In many countries manufacturing occurs largely in the home. Family members produce a variety of products for high-tech life styles in other parts of the world.

Honduran women increase their family incomes through beekeeping. In Zimbabwe formerly nomadic women produce school uniforms to earn needed income, while at the same time increasing their children's school attendance. Nepali women have increased their incomes and improved community nutrition by using newly acquired orange juice production and preservation techniques.

In many developing nations the home has become the local storefront, bakery, or restaurant. In other areas the home is the location for manufacturing goods such as cotton textile products. Swaziland women sew school uniforms at a much lower cost than those previously available, producing and repairing school shoes, and weaving and dyeing fabrics such as batiks that are sold in developed countries.

In many developing countries today, the informed and trained family member, usually the woman working out of the home, is able to provide for the family's basic needs such as food, health, and education. As families, especially women, are empowered to provide for their own well-being, most fundamental causes of poverty, injustice, illness, and premature death can be overcome.

### Home Economics Curricula

Home economics at the secondary, college, and university level is a natural beginning point in defining what types of skills would be needed in home-based endeavors. Secondary home economics programs should help young people examine the possibility of combining parenting and careers.