



Douglas R. Clark

TEACHERS TOUCHING ETERNITY THROUGH THEIR STUDENTS

INTRODUCING A SPECIAL ISSUE ON HONORS EDUCATION

In the autumn of 2009, I attended the annual conference of the premier college/university Honors association in the United States—the National Collegiate Honors Council—held in Washington, D.C. Along with nearly 1,900 other Honors program directors and Honors students from around the country, I was privileged to attend plenary lectures on various topics in higher education; to participate in roundtable discussions and informative sessions on best practices in the field; and to talk with colleagues engaged in the fine business of Honors education.

Among the highlights for me was a statement by one of the plenary speakers, Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, who consults for a variety of esteemed organizations. A child leader in the civil-rights movement from Birmingham, Alabama, who received his Ph.D. in higher education administration/statistics at 24 years of age, Dr. Hrabowski quoted a sage who said that “Teachers touch eternity through their students.”

This is a profound notion, even if not a new one. The idea that students, energized about their educational experience at a Seventh-day Adventist university or college, become collaborative agents of seeking and knowing and serving, living extensions throughout their lifetimes and beyond of their teachers’ best efforts to contribute to their collective growth intellectually, spiritually, socially—this drives and motivates educators. It is what keeps us going, even as we face the grading of mounds of papers and exams.

Dr. Hrabowski likely did not have the religious connotations of this gem in mind when he delivered it to the hundreds gathered in Washington. But that shouldn’t stop us from taking the statement in this direction. Beyond relishing the responsibilities and the rewards of knowing

that what they teach to and learn from students has long-lasting implications for humanity here on earth, Christian teachers also find a profound satisfaction knowing that what they do carries eternal implications.

This issue of *THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION* is dedicated to the exploration of Honors programs in the Adventist system of higher education in the North American Division. While universities and colleges (Adventist and otherwise) located elsewhere in the world may offer special programs for highly motivated students, “Honors” programs are primarily a North American phenomenon. For a basic definition of Honors programs, see page 4, from the National Collegiate Honors Council. A listing of characteristics of fully developed Honors programs can be found on page 30.

The articles in this issue—all by Adventist Honors program directors or former directors—the sidebars, photos, tables, and quotes, all seek to enlarge our vision of college/university education, particularly as it relates to the hundreds of academically gifted students who enroll in our schools seeking the educational adventure best suited to their unique talents and skills. While some may envision Honors students as mostly white, upper-class students from wealthy families, the photos in this issue of the *JOURNAL* will demonstrate a wide diversity in background and ethnicity.

This collection of articles and related information seeks to explore the philosophical foundations of educating bright students, the history of Honors programs in Adventist higher education, the dynamics of successful Honors programs, the creative intellectual, spiritual, and social ferment characterizing Honors education across the North American learning landscape, and the service component of Honors programs. Each author has sought to define and describe an aspect of higher education that deserves our collaborative efforts to foster and facilitate.

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wanted an opportunity to take classes outside his majors. Southern Scholars allowed him to pursue his diverse interests in physics, caving, ancient literature, woodworking, and international relations. He said, "As a direct result of these experiences, I obtained a job in the Physics Department, I gained new friends, I learned how to rig a high line over a waterfall, I was challenged to formulate my personal ethical philosophy, and I also got to make a sweet set of turned wooden rolling pins."

The academic, spiritual, and social aspects of Adventist Honors education are like the three primary colors in a rainbow (red, yellow, and blue). Just as a person might prefer one of the primary colors or a gradient between the colors, an Honors student might prefer the academic, the spiritual, or the social aspects of

Honors or a combination thereof. A student eager for intellectual stimulation, spiritual nourishment, and a great group of friends will flourish in an Adventist Honors education. ✍



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It is also the goal of the coordinator, authors, and editor that this issue of the JOURNAL can be used to reach out to students in high school and college, and their parents, who are seeking an education from teachers touching eternity—students who are highly motivated to work hard, think critically, process synthetically, avoid shallowness, live wholistically, engage in civil discourse, serve others, and worship with integrity and enthusiasm. An additional goal is to explore the current state of Honors education in the North American Division in an effort to raise awareness about the needs of the church's gifted young people, to nudge church leadership toward a more profound commitment to provide a sustainable system of support for academic excellence and exploration, to attract students committed to high achievement, and to touch eternity through these fine students.

Douglas R. Clark, Ph.D., is Director of the Honors program at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, and Coordinator for

this special issue of the JOURNAL. The editorial staff wish to express their heartfelt appreciation for the many hours Dr. Clark devoted to defining topics and contacting potential authors, soliciting and assembling factual information about the various Honors programs, helping the editor obtain peer reviewers and review their recommendations; and throughout the entire planning and production process, cheerfully and promptly answering a myriad of questions and offering helpful advice.

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An advertisement for the 'circle' website. On the left, a blue vertical banner contains the 'circle' logo (a stylized figure on a circle) and the text 'Join the circle to find curricula for Adventist early childhood education'. Below this is a dark brown bar with the website URL 'circle.adventist.org' and the tagline 'linking Christian educators anytime anywhere'. On the right, a photograph shows a woman in a white outfit running happily in a grassy field with two young children, one in a green shirt and one in a blue shirt, holding hands and running alongside her.