



# Adventist Education Makes a Difference

By G. L. Plubell and Gordon Madgwick

**A**dventist schools are central to the mission of the church. They are indispensable partners with the home and the church in the salvation of our children and youth.

The course of study, or curriculum, in an Adventist school provides the central avenue by which children are led to biblical wisdom. The Adventist curriculum differs in several major respects from that of the secular school. It seeks to fulfill the biblical ideal that "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13). In K-12 schools in the North American Division approximately 68,000 individual Bible study contacts of 40-50 minutes are made each day during the school year.

The division directors and administrators take very seriously their responsibility in the area of curriculum development. During the past quinquennium, there have been literally scores of K-12 curriculum development workshops and steering committees held to develop curriculum guides, textbooks, and supplemental materials to enhance the effectiveness of a uniquely Adventist and Christ-centered curriculum for our schools.

## *Elementary and Secondary Schools*

Adventist schools contribute to the richness and quality of church programs. They provide future lay leadership as well as professional leadership for all areas of church-sponsored institutions and organizations.

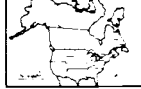
An important component of this training is in the vast array and often unsung community and mission projects and activities involving students from Adventist schools. *The Christian Service Curriculum Guide*, available to all Adventist teachers and schools, lists dozens of ideas for involving students in a great variety of community service and witnessing outreach activities appropriate to each grade level or age group.

Creative teachers and students who are sensitive to the needs of their communities and the world have come up with numerous ideas for Christian service activities. In recent years we have seen many projects that involved visiting shut-ins, cleaning yards, sharing fresh student-baked bread or rolls with neighbors, singing, visiting, and praying with residents of nursing homes, painting houses, cleaning up streets, highways, and parks, working with local and government officials in planting trees, promoting healthful living through anti-smoking, anti-drug, and a host of other service-related programs.

Many students have participated in Maranatha-type trips to Mexico, Bel-

dale, Tennessee, learn techniques for bird banding. They also record the variety of birds that live in and migrate through their area.

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ize, and other locations to help build churches, schools, and clinics. While there, they have conducted Vacation Bible schools and story hours for local children. Those activities and hundreds more testify to the desire of many of today's youth to be involved in the mission of the church.

### ***What of the Future?***

The changing demographics of society as well as the Adventist Church has had an impact upon our schools. The years of slow population growth, the changing family and increase in single-parent homes, the ever-increasing education costs, the quest for academic excellence, and a variety of other challenges have pushed the church into a reassessment of its schools.

Recent studies commissioned by the North American Division Boards of Education for K-12 and Higher Education confirm that Seventh-day Adventists are firmly committed to Adventist education. These studies also indicate a strong desire for confronting some of the troubling issues in Adventist education and working toward change and renewal.

As a result, Project Affirmation has been launched to develop this shared vision for the future of Adventist education. (See article on page 14.)

How do the statistics of Adventist schools K-12 of 1990 compare with

those at the beginning of this quinquennium?

The enrollment graph indicates that the reports about the demise of Adventist schools have been greatly exaggerated. While we would feel more comfortable with greater enrollment increases, the virtually "holding our own" pattern, as contrasted with trends in other mainline Christian schools, can be viewed as an encouraging prospect.

The ongoing implementation efforts of programs from Project Affirmation should provide increased school enrollments during the 1990-1995 quinquennium.

Figure 2 will surprise those who allege that there has been a widespread closing of schools across the North American Division. The large number of small elementary schools does show a shifting pattern. However, while the total number of elementary schools did decrease during the part quinquennium, the actual enrollment (Figure 1) showed a slight increase.

The growth in the number of academies during the quinquennium illustrates the continuing shift from boarding schools to small day academies. (Figure 2).

### ***A Look at Higher Education***

Recent priorities in Adventist higher education in North America have had



to add to a striving for excellence the critical element of survival. Lewis B. Mayhew, one of America's most readily identified educators, reviewed numerous analyses of the problems facing higher education and wrote that:

The suggestions range from the gloom and doom predictions that nothing can really be done to save large numbers of private institutions to the happy contention that things are not really bad and that if institutions have faith and keep on doing what they are doing they will survive and even prosper.<sup>1</sup>

Ernest L. Boyer, president of the prestigious Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, wrote in *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* that undergraduate colleges in the United States "are confused over their purposes and rocked by tensions that prevent them from providing coherent educational experience for their students."<sup>2</sup>

The later part of the 1980s unquestionably posed a distinct moment of truth for many American institutions of higher education. When Mayhew identified institutions that would face the most serious problems during the 1980s, he listed as number one "the small, little known liberal arts college."

### ***Fulfillment of Mission***

However, statistical benchmarks cannot show whether these schools are fulfilling their mission. Are Christian values being nurtured? Is social responsibility being taught? John and Charles Wesley affirmed, "Let us unite the two so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety." Is this being achieved in the Adventist colleges and universities in North America?

The answer is an unequivocal Yes. The challenges of the eighties have demanded that each institution review its goals, purposes, and objectives in relation to the mission of the North American Division and the Adventist Church worldwide. Despite the unprecedented risks and challenges facing educational institutions, there is overwhelming agreement within the church in North America that these institutions have never been more vital to the church. Though the colleges and universities of other church systems came to similar conclusions some years ago, they failed to recognize that significant change occurs only when *everyone* within the system works together.

Recognizing this, the Boards of Education, K-12 and Higher, deliber-



*The textbooks and teachers' materials shown here represent only a portion of those produced in the past several years by the North American Division Office of Education.*

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ately joined efforts to sponsor a broad market survey by the Seltzer Daley Companies. This study brought vital information confirming consensus within the church regarding (1) the importance of Adventist education that stresses strong spiritual and academic quality and (2) the importance of grassroots participation in all phases of educational planning and implementation.

As a result, Project Affirmation was initiated to affirm the mission of Seventh-day Adventist education and revitalize the systems in North America. This project has resulted in tremendous energy being generated by enthusiastic people bonded by the mission that all of our children and youth are to be taught of the Lord.

#### ***Commitment to Service***

It is impossible to visit any one of our Adventist colleges and universities in North America without sensing a deep commitment to mission, to service, and to excellence by both students and faculty. How this commitment is expressed varies from institution to institution, but it may be appropriate to note a few highlights.

The commitment of those participating in B.R.U.S.H. (Beautifying Residences Using Student Help) program has to be seen to be fully appreciated. Union College students have

painted 91 homes for the elderly and handicapped in Lincoln, Nebraska, and their "brush strokes of love" clearly show the community how much they care. At the same school a faculty-staff meeting was called to seek input regarding the future budget of the institution. In a beautiful statement of commitment to youth ministry in the Mid-America Union, the entire college faculty and staff voted to freeze salaries and wages, thus contributing \$144,000 to the operation of the college.

The colleges and universities of North America are firmly committed to service, and every campus sponsors unique applications of love to the communities around them. These schools are totally dedicated to the volunteer student missionary and youth service ministries of the church. The majority of the 333 young people in these services this year come from the North American Division.

#### ***The Difference—A Dedicated Constituency***

While Adventist colleges and universities in North America have had to face moments of truth with these threats, they are all endowed with one element vital to institutional viability—a constituency dedicated to Adventist education. Mayhew clearly recognized this when he wrote that

Wheaton College in Illinois and the colleges maintained by the Seventh-day Adventist Church

are in no danger of failing as long as the conservative, evangelical Protestant population of the country continues to grow and to insist that new generations be educated in Christian values and ethics. Any institution, private or public, with an equally dedicated and committed constituency has the potential of indefinite life.<sup>3</sup>

During the past five years the Adventist colleges and universities in North America have grappled with the challenges facing higher education at large. These include (1) a diminishing pool of eligible students, (2) rapidly escalating operational costs, particularly in such areas as insurance, supplies, and funds for student scholarships, (3) lack of significant endowments, (4) diminished reserves to maintain physical plants and upgrade equipment, (5) limited cash flow, and difficulty in attracting committed and competent faculty members. Though a number of people would like to dedicate their lives to Adventist education, they frankly cannot do so because current wage scales fail to provide even the most modest standard of living in areas where the cost of living is high.

Though there have been significant challenges to Adventist colleges and universities in North America, this has in no way diminished their



commitment to the distinctiveness of mission on which the institutions were founded. The institutions have a sense of common purpose and identity. They all seek to help Adventist young people "prepare for fruitful lives within the church and in the wider society around it by providing them with an education in a Christian setting." As the catalog for Atlantic Union College states,

By establishing a campus in which study and work occur within the framework of Christian faith, the college is committed to the belief that knowledge and action can best be turned into creative power in society when individuals see their entire lives as gifts of service to a loving Creator.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Vital Statistics*

Despite a diminishing pool of eligible students, most of the colleges and universities have maintained, and in some cases even increased, their overall enrollments (Figure 3). This indicates that the church at large believes Christian education is an Adventist essential.

Between 1985 and 1989, North American colleges and universities of North America conferred 18,281 degrees, of which 1,357 were at the doctoral level (Figure 4).

#### *Commitment to Excellence*

Caring, competent, committed teachers are the key to academic success. Adventist higher education has benefited greatly by the generosity of two California members dedicated to Adventist education, Tom and Violet Zapara, who have pro-

FIGURE 3

## Enrollment Trends, Fall Term, 1985-1989 North American Division Colleges and Universities

Enrollment is headcount and includes unclassified and other special students but not Adventist Colleges Abroad students. Students in external degree and extension programs are included.

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
<b>Andrews University</b> .....	3,032	3,053	2,979	3,215	2,907
<b>Atlantic Union College</b> .....	567	588	680	795	805
<b>Canadian Union College</b> .....	302	263	251	262	278
<b>Columbia Union College</b> .....	834	1,031	1,233	1,096	1,131
<b>Kettering College of Medical Arts</b> .....	418	440	491	597	656
<b>Loma Linda University</b> .....	4,390	4,569	4,187	4,393	3,810
<b>Oakwood College</b> .....	1,141	978	1,074	1,227	1,223
<b>Pacific Union College</b> .....	1,402	1,499	1,527	1,614	1,678
<b>Southern College of SDA</b> .....	1,468	1,327	1,366	1,443	1,526
<b>Southwestern Adventist College</b> .....	734	795	845	778	758
<b>Union College</b> .....	749	670	591	645	627
<b>Walla Walla College</b> .....	1,567	1,452	1,428	1,515	1,503
<b>TOTALS</b> .....	16,604	16,665	16,652	17,580	16,902



vided funds for 36 annual awards for faculty members chosen by their colleagues for their excellence in teaching. The Zapara Awards look to the model of the true teacher given by Ellen White:

The true teacher... is not satisfied with directing his students to a standard lower than the highest which it is possible for them to attain. He cannot be content with imparting to them only technical knowledge, with making them merely clever accountants, skillful artisans, successful tradesmen. It is his ambition to inspire them with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity—principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society. He desires them, above all else, to learn life's great lesson of unselfish service.<sup>5</sup>

Academic quality is intrinsic to the mission of all Adventist colleges and universities. The Atlantic Union College choir and the New England Youth Ensemble have demonstrated the vitality of a small Seventh-day Adventist college in New England with their fifth concert at Carnegie Hall under the direction of a noted British conductor, John Rutter, who also chose this group for a premiere performance of one of his compositions. Rutter told the *Worcester Telegram*, "This is an orchestra I feel learns very fast and has an innate sense of musicianship. They really seem to pick up every point that I make in rehearsal." What a wonderful witness to the world of commitment to excellence!

**What of the Future?**

The serious realities facing Adventist

education today will undoubtedly continue for some years to come. Increasing costs, competition from non-Adventist schools, and apparent erosion of moral values and faith commitment in students, parents, and society at large will not just disappear. These challenges can be met, however, if the entire church commits itself to the philosophy that all of our children and youth shall be taught of the Lord. This can happen if we dedicate our lives to this pur-

pose and claim the promises of God. □

REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Lewis B. Mayhew, *Surveying the Eighties* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1979), p. 30.  
<sup>2</sup> Cited in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, XXXVI:15 (December 13, 1989), p. A 28.  
<sup>3</sup> Mayhew, p. 2.  
<sup>4</sup> *Atlantic Union College General Catalog*, 1989-1990, pp. 12, 13.  
<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), pp. 29, 30.

FIGURE 4

**Degrees Conferred 1985-1989**

Enrollment is headcount and includes unclassified and other special students but not Adventist Colleges Abroad students. Students in external degree and extension programs are included.

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1978-88	1988-89	Total
<b>UNDERGRADUATE</b>						
Baccalaureate .....	2,073	2,160	1,967	2,065	2,132	10,397
Associate .....	895	835	735	605	480	3,550
Certificate .....	59	57	41	29	56	242
<b>GRADUATE</b>						
All Masters .....	591	668	580	543	595	2,977
All Doctorate .....	270	278	262	271	276	1,357
Medical* .....	125	137	124	127	126	639
Dental* .....	96	96	89	92	86	459
Public Health* .....	8	7	5	5	17	42
Specialist .....	15	15	13	10	15	68

\*Also included in the "All Doctorate" section.