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Editorial

A Matter of Mission

Do you know why Seventh-day Adventists operate a network of almost 6,000 schools, academies, colleges, and universities around the world? Or, to be more specific and personal, what is the purpose of the educational institution in which you work as an administrator, teacher, or staff member? Many of our tertiary institutions have drafted statements of mission, with encouragement from the Board of Regents and the regional accrediting associations. Such statements help focus attention and rally the energies of an entire institution around its primary purpose.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recently crafted a short mission statement, which was approved by the world delegates attending the Spring Meeting in April 1993. You may read the full text on page 4 of this issue. In describing the methods that our church utilizes to achieve its mission, the document includes a section on education, which states: "Acknowledging that development of mind and character is essential to God's redemptive plan, we promote the growth of a mature understanding of and relationship to God, His Word, and the created universe."

Does the school in which you teach have a mission statement? If not, let me encourage you to develop one. After seeking broad input from administration, faculty, staff, and parents, then have it approved by the board. Such a statement should agree with and expand upon the church's mission statement. It may include a section on objectives. In printed form, the entire document should fit in one page.

To stimulate discussion and help those institutions that wish to draft a mission statement, let me suggest five objectives that I think will apply to the majority of our schools. Feel free to adapt them to your own educational level and circumstances.

The general objectives of an Adventist educational institution are:

1. To educate Seventh-day Adventist youth for a useful life, in the context of Christian faith and biblical values, keeping in balance their intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social development.
2. To train future Adventist leaders and denominational workers, encouraging them to devote their talents to accomplishing the church's mission until Jesus comes.
3. To deepen the commitment of Adventist youth to Christ, and to attract to His church non-Adventist youth of high ideals, helping all of them to develop Christlike characters.
4. To exert an uplifting influence on society, the nation, and the world through service, evangelism, research, and discoveries carried out by Adventist educators, students, and alumni.
5. To cooperate with church leaders and members in discovering new truths, developing mission strategies, and providing Adventist answers to the ethical issues faced by society.

Once the mission statement is adopted, all parties involved in the life of the school—educators, students, parents, and church leaders—will have a point of reference for activities such as granting admission, hiring staff, determining curricular and co-curricular programs, or updating and applying the code of discipline.

The time has come for all Adventist teachers and administrators to prayerfully articulate the *raison d'être* of their schools, and thereby strengthen their institutional identity and mission.—Humberto M. Rasi.