

International Education in Adventist Colleges and Universities

Every year, about 500,000 international students, or approximately 3.5 percent of the American student population, study in U.S. colleges and universities. Additionally, large numbers of international students attend Canadian, Western European, and Australian institutions. The countries supplying the largest number of international students at the turn of the century were China, Japan, and India. These students typically select coursework in science and engineering, computing, information technology, and social sciences.

Meanwhile, the reverse also occurs. Approximately 100,000 American college students (about 0.65 percent of the tertiary population) go abroad to study, especially to Europe. They concentrate on the humanities, social sciences, and business.

Educational leaders in America and Europe recognize and facilitate this interest by encouraging intercollegiate transfer, study-abroad programs, exchange programs for

educators, recognition of international diplomas, and quality assurance between the different educational systems.

Motives for International Study

This enormous interest in international education suggests some obvious realities: international business and trade, a worldwide economy, the mobility of people between countries, and the desire for greater political, religious, and cultural understanding of other nations and their citizens. But of course, the underlying motive should be appreciation for the value of every human being. People are the greatest asset in the world, and a good education increases the value of that asset.

Adventist colleges and universities embrace international education. ACA (Adventist Colleges Abroad) typically attracts 0.75 percent of the American Adventist college population (somewhat greater than the

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By Niels-Erik Andreasen



Andrews University (AU) President Niels-Erik Andreasen enjoys interacting with students on campus.

national average for overseas study). In addition, significant numbers of Asian, African, Latin American, and European students study in countries other than their own, in many cases attending an Adventist college that serves a number of countries.

Ensuring a Truly International Education

But these statistics do not address international education at the deepest level. Merely attending a college in another country or studying with international students does not guarantee that one will receive an international education.

Andrews University is a case in point. Approximately 20 to 25 percent of its student population is international, and another 10 percent have some international background, generally due to their parents' immigration to the United States. This creates a wonderful international atmosphere on campus, expressed through international clubs and food fairs, music from around the world, flags and fanfare, and scores of languages. Such an international atmosphere is informative and even educational, but by itself, it does not make our education truly "international." In fact, much of Adventist education is not as international as it appears.

Ideas

What, then, does it take to make Adventist education truly international? Here are a few suggestions:

1. A curriculum of teaching and learning resources that helps



Flags from the many countries represented by students attending Andrews University line the campus mall for special events throughout the year.



Adventist Colleges Abroad students experience travel and educational opportunities. This photo was taken in Lyon, France, in front of the Church Baillique Notre-dame De Fourviere.

students to think about and understand international issues, e.g., by asking them to discover how single issues like economic development, religious belief, or family life impact people in different nations or regions of the world.

2. A requirement that students acquaint themselves with the language, history, literature, religion, and art of one or more



Korean students share sounds from their homeland at AU's International Food Fair.



AU's annual International Food Fair offers the community a chance to taste food from around the world.



AU's international students display their patriotism from the residence hall windows of Burman/University Towers.

countries or regions other than their own.

3. An opportunity to study in another country, ideally with students of that country, or in meaningful association with the indigenous population.

Adventist education must become significantly more international. Graduates of our schools participate in all the internationalism of our world, and they belong to one of the most international churches in existence. To be an Adventist in the 21st century means to be an international person, which points out the need for international educational initiatives. By contrast, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, many North American and other Western Christians traveled abroad as missionaries, but few learned about the lands they served in teaching new converts. That is now changing, as our church becomes authentically international. This change dictates that our educational institutions also become sufficiently international

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to support the genuine internationalization of our church. If this happens, our graduates will also be far better prepared to make their way in our brave new intercultural world outside the church organization.

Going Back to Our Roots

In a way, the call for international education takes us to the heart of our existence as Adventist educators and brings us back to our earliest roots. The first Christians were very international in their thinking and action. National Christianity is a relatively recent phenomenon that emerged when religious and national interests became interconnected. But that was not Christ's intention when He instructed His followers to go to all nations, make disciples of them, baptize, and teach them (Matthew 28:19, 20). Given this foundation, Adventist educators should help replace national Christianity with genuine international understanding and commitment. Remember the first angelic messenger who in the time of the end proclaims an eternal gospel "to every nation, tribe, language and people" (Revelation 14:6, NIV)? Only an international Christian can fully participate in that assignment. ✍



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