

Strength Through Unity:

A President's View

If Adventist higher education is to thrive in the coming years, it must develop a renewed respect for church education at all levels. We are, to a great degree, a self-perpetuating system. We train the students who in turn become our teachers and work to inspire our future students.

If one member of our body rejects or thinks little of another, the entire system is made ill. We must respect the persons who work at each level of our system and hold in high regard each institution as it carries out its part of our shared task. Adventist higher education must do its part to encourage this

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attitude. It must inspire able students to enter the field of education and see that high standards of quality and commitment are evident in its graduates. To achieve this, let us do all that we can to deserve and foster respect among ourselves.

Today's literature on management calls for a strong team effort to inspire new directions in service institutions. Our schools offer a most vital service to our youth, our world, and our church. The spirit of our schools is the spirit we offer to the world.

The warm, fraternal spirit that guided Adventist education at its inception created a cohesive educational enterprise. Through the years considerable refinement and sophistication have been infused into our system, but recent events have tested our original camaraderie and common goals. We cannot give in to the destructive forces of competition and elitism. Rather, we should encourage cooperation among church and school administrators, as well as among teachers and staff across the university, college, secondary, and elementary levels.

Christ reflected in the lives of our teachers and administrators at all levels should be the vital ingredient in our schools. Ellen White counsels us that "As the workers in each institution plan unselfishly to help the other[s], the blessing of the Lord will surely rest upon [all]."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 520.

There is no substitute for trust and unity among our institutions. Such trust comes from the achievement of a personal faith and experience with Jesus Christ. He is the wellspring for true reliance on the redemptive plan which is the heart of our mission. This trust is contagious and will provide bonding among all educators.

An experience demonstrating such absolute trust is told by Leslie Weatherhead. During the first World War, he writes, a soldier in the trenches saw his friend out in no-man's land fall in a crossfire of bullets. He said to his officer, "I request permission to go, sir, and bring him in."

His officer refused. "No one can go out there and live," he said. "I would only lose you as well." But the man disobeyed the order and went out to save his friend, for they had been like David and Jonathan throughout the war. Somehow he got his friend on his shoulder and staggered back to the trenches, but his friend was dead and he himself was mortally wounded.

The officer was angry. "I told you not to go and now I have lost both of you. It was not worth it."

The soldier responded, "It was worth it, sir."

"And how could that be?" demanded the officer. "Your friend is dead and you are dying."

The young man was reproached but he looked up into his officer's face and said, "It was worth it, sir, because when I got to him he said, 'Jim, I knew you'd come.'"

If such valor and underlying trust inspire unselfishness in the face of death, it must also inspire us to sustain and nurture God-given life. Responsible and productive efforts are predicated on loyalty and commitment to others. This critical thread of unity and trust must run through all we accomplish in higher education.

May each school's unique work be blended into the common goal of educating a godly, intelligent, and committed group of people. In so doing, respect for the work of each school and teacher must be a constant among all entities of our Adventist educational system—Norman J. Woods. □

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