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The Same Mission

ENRIQUE BECERRA

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a twofold mission that must guide every activity and program: to tell others what Jesus has done for our salvation, and to prepare people to meet the Lord at His second coming.

Adventist higher education (colleges, seminaries, and universities operated by the church) has the same mission. The only difference is the methodology or the specialized manner in which it fulfills this mission. Following Humberto Rasi's 1998 outline on the main functions of an Adventist college or university, I would like to propose to my higher education colleagues that they see all aspects of our work as contributing to the fulfillment of the church's mission. This embraces four main areas:

1. *Instruction.* To equip students, in the context of the biblical-Christian worldview, with the necessary knowledge and academic skills to live a useful life and to contribute to society. To do this will require not only formal academic instruction, but also a commitment from the institution and faculty, to ensure that all personnel and programs focus on preparing students for a life of service both now and throughout eternity.

2. *Formation.* To convey to students the principles, beliefs, and values they need to develop a noble and balanced character, to make ethical decisions, to establish a Christian home, and to actively share their faith. Preparation for life on this earth includes the formation of a character fit for eternity. This is a very important task in the mission of the Adventist Church.

3. *Research.* Teachers and students can broadly and deeply explore the vast world of knowledge under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discovering new truths and creative techniques to improve the quality of human life and to facilitate the mission of the church. A church that would prepare investigators for eternity must begin this important practice here and now. This task combines the search for truth and a commitment to use one's discoveries to benefit the church and humankind.

4. *Outreach.* Reaching out to those beyond the campus is an important part of higher education. Adventist higher education can exert an uplifting influence on society in ever-widening circles through service, evangelism, research, and discoveries carried out by Adventist educators, students, and alumni. To do this, they must make available to others the knowledge, values, and techniques embraced or discovered by a Christian institution. This will help fulfill the mission of the church by furthering the pursuit of knowledge, alleviating human needs, and spreading the gospel to those who might not be reached by other means.

The mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel, inviting nonbelievers to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and then to undergo a transformation that will help them build a character fitted for heaven. Adventist higher education must invite students to begin a life of faith in Jesus Christ (if they have not done so already) and then to continue developing their faith until our Lord's return.

The mission of our educational profession—and of our church—is one and the same: to teach, to form Christian characters, to discover new information, and to communicate knowledge and faith. These activities of tertiary education reveal the level and quality of a school's program. They are complementary and can occur simultaneously. If we as higher education personnel commit ourselves to these goals, we can make a marvelous contribution to the mission of the church and to society as we experience the joy of preparing our students for the kingdom of God. ☺