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Guest Editorial

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GENE EDELBACH | *Co-coordinator*

Reading, 'Riting, and Recruiting

For years a discussion has persisted among Adventist educators regarding the prospective pool of students for our elementary schools, academies, and colleges. Some insist that the answer to filling our schools would be shutting down many of our institutions in order to try to provide a larger and more financially secure education at a few bigger institutions. Others maintain that we don't need larger institutions, just more of them because students prefer to enroll close to home. I and many of my colleagues believe that both opinions have validity and may contribute to the solution.

In the North American Division, we are currently enrolling only a small fraction of the Seventh-day Adventist students who are of the age to obtain an Adventist education. Although the number varies from region to region, typically, we are only enrolling about one-fifth of the available students who could be filling all levels of Seventh-day Adventist schools (2000 NAD Statistics). These statistics indicate that not only are there sufficient students to fill the desks in our schools, but that if we were to capture the missing four-fifths, we would probably need to double our current number of institutions. We, as educational leaders, should be looking forward to growth, development of new institutions, and strengthening of programs, not reminiscing about the "good old days" or being defensive. While there will be an occasional need to downsize a specific program due to changing demographics, this should be the rare exception rather than the norm.

Not only do we have a large pool of Adventists to draw from, but many of us are situated in communities where our solid academic programs, built on a Christian foundation, would be a welcome option for many people in our communities. While we must maintain the uniqueness of our mission and our Seventh-day Adventist traditions, there are many people not from our church who would be pleased to pay tuition so their children could have a Christian education.

It should be our goal as a church, and as educators, to double the number of students who are currently receiving the blessings, education, and guidance provided by our high-quality education system. I pray that as you read through the articles my colleagues and I have submitted for this edition of the JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION, your interest will be renewed and your energies focused toward developing new creative methods of marketing that will substantially increase the enrollment and stability of your educational institution. ☞

Gene Edlbach, *Co-coordinator for this issue, currently serves as Enrollment Services Vice President at La Sierra University in Riverside, California. He has held similar positions at other Adventist institutions of higher learning. Prior to his involvement with college marketing and enrollment, he served as a boarding school principal, teacher, men's dean, and marketing specialist at the secondary level.*