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# Education for a Sure Future: Eternity

Surveys of higher education in various countries indicate that many nations are seeking to improve the accessibility and performance of their college and university systems. For example, in a September 2006 report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*,<sup>1</sup> a commission appointed by the secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) observed that higher education has become one of America's greatest success stories. Yet despite its overall optimism, the commission acknowledged that American higher education "needs to improve in dramatic ways" to achieve its unfulfilled promises.



Ella Smith Simmons

Could this same message be applied to Seventh-day Adventist higher education? Could we benefit from a sharper—and perhaps more scholarly—look at our loosely coupled “system” of education? Such an assessment, while not targeting individual institutions, could assess the church's fundamental commitments to and expectations for higher education.

## The Focus

The USDOE challenged higher education to consider change as “nothing less than securing the promise of the future and unleashing the potential of the American people.”<sup>2</sup> It offered several recommendations intended to (1) improve access to higher education and make it more affordable, (2) strengthen its quality and encourage innovation, and (3) bring much-needed transparency and accountability to U.S. colleges and universities. In its self-acclaimed “bold” recommendations, it called for a return to its core values of higher educational philosophy. Could Seventh-day Adventist higher education benefit from dialogue that seeks to re-center our efforts, as well?

## Charge in Adventist Higher Education

More than a century ago, in the early decades of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, God's messenger articulated the fundamental character and aim for our educational endeavors: redemption, and its core: Christ. She said, “In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one.”<sup>3</sup> The denomination's higher education system is a miraculous success story throughout the world. Yet, despite its accomplishments, we face an ever more challenging future that calls for reassessment and dramatic change.

We must find ways to provide greater access to Adventist higher education for the millions of youth and young adults who are part of our church family, and we must identify ways to make it affordable for all who wish to attend. We must be more innovative and intentional in our efforts to prepare our youth to take on leadership responsibilities in society and in the church. But above all, we must remain committed to preparing them for eternity. These aims and their urgency require that we become ever more transparent and accountable. We have a responsibility to God, to the members of our church, and to the citizens of the various countries where we operate churches and schools.

## Commitment

Whatever we do, we must remain true to our aim and to our core values. Charles Malik, in his critique of the Christian university, asserts that “schools which claim affiliation to his Name, hardly demonstrate in practice that Jesus Christ has any relevance to the matter and spirit of their scientific research and learning.”<sup>4</sup> He believes that many have arrived at this state by “swerving” from their core values, viewing this shift as “progress” while failing

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Portfolio II Requirements Goal Options	
ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Portfolio II Orientation Workshop (used provided).</li> </ul>
ETHICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Spiritual Boundaries: The Ethics of Praying With Patients workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend one Health and Faith Forum at [location]. Submit Attendance &amp; Summary Form. Topics posted on Blackboard prior to lecture.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>View a Bioethics Grand Rounds video, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Available at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the Ethical Bioethics documentary on reserve at university library, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch DVD Beyond Hair Composure: Philosophy and Care at Life's End by Drs. Windows on reserve at university library, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Rate using 1-4*.'s.</li> </ul>
COMMUNISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Compassion: The Heart of Healing Love workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video The Swine, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Available in video stores. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video W6, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Available at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the DVD Code the Book, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Available at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the DVD/Video Paperolla, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Available at video stores. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> </ul>
HUMAN WORTH (TRAD REQUIRED)	<p><b>REQUIRED:</b> Complete eight hour mission of service learning. Submit Service Learning Documentation Form.</p> <p><b>AND CHOOSE ONE OPTION BELOW:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch the HBO documentary <i>Without Pity</i>, a film about abortion – narrated by Christopher Reeve – and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Parity Matters</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library, and in video stores. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>The Color of Paradise</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Create original art or poetry to express your thoughts and feelings on human worth. Art must be sized 8 1/2" x 11". Poetry must be a minimum of 12 lines.</li> </ul>

Goal Options	
TEAMWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Training King Rats and Certain Clickers: Meeting the Basic Needs of Children workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Caring Home Care: Self-Care for Health Professionals</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Growing Up in a Filled World: Media &amp; the Developing Child</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>United System: Attend the interdisciplinary Genetics presentation only (if invited by your program. Not open to all students).</i></li> </ul>
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend No More Stage Fright: Teachers' International workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Make Presentations Hard for You (12 min.) AND Communicating for Results: How to Be Clear, Concise &amp; Credible (17 min.)</i> on reserve at university library. Write a one-page REACTION paper covering both videos. Rate using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend one session of Marital Counseling at university Student Counseling Center (free). Submit Attendance and Summary Form with signature.</li> </ul>
CHANGE IN HEALTHCARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Playing the Devil's Advocate in Healthcare Decision Making workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch Congressman Jerry Lewis' May 2003 address on healthcare issues, and write a one-page REACTION paper. DVD on reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Find an article in your discipline that discusses a change in healthcare, and write a one-page REACTION paper. Attach a copy of the article to your paper.</li> </ul>
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend The License You Love May Be Your Own: Professional Behavior workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Read an article from your professional organization journal and write a one-page REACTION paper. Submit journal article, reaction paper, and copy of the journal cover.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend a professional meeting in your discipline. Submit Attendance and Summary Form.</li> </ul>

Goal Options	
WHOLENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Mad About Everything: Managing Anger and Resentment workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend Addiction in Caregivers: Just When You Thought It Couldn't Be You workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Yankee With Meats</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. In video stores. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Eating Disorders: The Inner Voice</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the DVD <i>Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies &amp; Alcohol</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend three relaxation classes at [location]. Obtain the instructor's signatures at each class. Submit Attendance and Summary Form.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend an AA (or Al-Anon or Adult Child of Alcoholics) meeting. Submit Attendance and Summary Form with Coordinator's signature. See Blackboard for details/website.</li> </ul>
DIVERSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend two Diversity Lunch Powers. Complete Diversity Lunch Power Documentation Form.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch the video <i>Cultural Diversity in Healthcare</i>, and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend the Martin Luther King Symposium on Diversity in Healthcare. Lunch invitation required, e-mail [address]. Submit Attendance and Summary Form.</li> </ul>
LIFELONG LEARNING (TRAD REQUIRED)	<p><b>REQUIRED:</b> Professional student (see Blackboard for required guidelines and samples).</p> <p><b>AND CHOOSE ONE OPTION BELOW:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend <i>Vocations: Enjoying the View</i> workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Read one of the books listed under Goal Characteristics – Lifelong Learning, and write a one-page REACTION paper.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend one of the following and submit Attendance and Summary Form (see website for hours and directions): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Rodlands Synagogue (35 with student ID)</li> <li>Getty Museum (free, parking \$7/car)</li> <li>Mormon Temple Museum in Pasadena (free with student ID)</li> <li>LA County Museum of Art (35 with student ID)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
PERSONAL FINANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend <i>Your Credit Score: What is it and How Can You Change it?</i> workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Attend <i>Home Buying 101: Making Your First Real Estate Investment</i> workshop.</li> <li>OR</li> <li>Watch one of the four <i>State Dream Personal Finance</i> DVDs (see film on Blackboard), and write a one-page REACTION paper. On reserve at university library. Rate video using 1-4*.'s.</li> </ul>

brace peace, justice, the relief of suffering, science, reason, and culture, as valuable as are these worthy goals and pursuits, they cannot replace Christ in Seventh-day Adventist higher education.

## Conclusion

The USDOE commission summed up its report with the acknowledgement that reaching its goals will require difficult decisions and major changes. It concluded with optimism that “Working together, we can build on the past successes of U.S. higher education to create an improved and revitalized postsecondary system that is better tailored to the demands, as well as the opportunities, of a new century.” Can we, as Seventh-day Adventists, conclude any less? 🍀

**Ella Smith Simmons** is Vice President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC) in Silver Spring, Maryland. As part of her work, she oversees several GC departments, including Education. She has worked as a teacher and administrator in several Adventist higher education institutions.

## REFERENCES

1. *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*. A Report of the Commission Appointed by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2006).
2. *Ibid.*, Summary, p. 16.
3. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: 1903), p. 17.
4. Charles Malik, *A Christian Critique of the University* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: North Waterloo Academic Press, 1987), p. 29.

## Editorial

Continued from page 3

to discern the compatibility of academic excellence and faith. Our colleges and universities have not yet gone that route, but they are vulnerable to this destabilization. Let us not fall away from our center, or take that excursion into decline.

We must not allow academic progress or scholarly attainment, worthy as these may be, to eclipse Christ as the center of our educational endeavors. While we believe in and em-