

Chicago Declaration – August 12, 2018

The Future of Seventh-day Adventist Higher Education

The relevance of Seventh-day Adventist Higher Education

Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, practices and world view have never been more needed in today's world. A world too often filled with emptiness, insecurity and restlessness needs the revelation of God's character in the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ. A world torn-apart with senseless acts of violence needs to know that the battles we face in this world are a small part of a much-larger conflict. People who are divided within themselves and among themselves need to be guided to the restoration of relationship with God and fellow human beings. People stressed out in the pursuit of production and consumption, addicted to devices and medicators, need the blessed peace that can be found in a genuine experience of the Sabbath. A world that is deteriorating needs to re-discover healing for both people and planet that is possible through a plant-based diet. A world that lives in fear of death and global catastrophe needs a blessed hope of the return of Jesus and the ultimate healing of the nations. Considering these facts, Seventh-day Adventist higher education has never been more essential than it is now.

In light of the following realities:

- Declining population of traditional college/university student population,
- Decreasing financial capacity of many Seventh-day Adventist families to afford private higher education,
- Decreasing willingness to borrow to finance a private education,
- Extraordinary increases in costs of providing a traditional college/university experience over the past 25 years,
- Increasing availability of competitive educational modalities that no longer require a residential campus (e.g. free community college, online degrees, and subscription-based programs),
- Employer expectations for competency-based education,
- The closure of Seventh-day Adventist schools in both the K-12 and higher education sectors, and
- The lack of a supportive structure between the Seventh-day Adventist K-12 and higher education entities in our division.

We share a commitment to shape a strategic alliance, consisting of a coalition of the willing, with the goal of first piloting and then evaluating the efficacy of an eventual higher education system. We intend for this to result in a whole that is stronger than the sum of its parts as demonstrated by, at least, the following five key success objectives:

1. Make Adventist Education affordable so that kids whose families make less than \$50,000 per year can afford to go to Adventist schools.
2. Faculty support: System wide support through a Teaching & Learning Center that focuses on pedagogy, modalities...also discipline teams, research teams.
3. Meaningful and measurable preparation for and successful internships during studies and employment after graduation based on industry perspectives and needs.
4. One division platform for Online Education.
5. Customized degrees enriched through micro-credentialing, badging, and competences-based learning.

While designing mutual-growth synergies, we will remain cognizant of the need for and significance of

- A robust Seventh-day Adventist identity
- Local university identity
- Local ownership (e.g. union conferences, Hospital systems, NAD)
- The authority and role of college or university boards of trustees
- Alumni support of individual institutions
- Providing top-quality education
- Local, national, professional and regional accreditation
- Partnership with the K-12 system

Toward accomplishing the above objective, the Adventist Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) will guide the following steps:

1. Each college/university president will facilitate an ongoing conversation this calendar year (2018) about the Chicago Declaration that includes his or her board of trustees, faculty, and campus community.
2. As the conversations in step one begin/occur, AACU¹ will establish a creative team to outline a way forward in the strategic process when the AACU executive² meets at the 2018 North American Division Year-end meeting.
3. By the end of this calendar year (2018), each campus will select a campus coordinator to encourage the ongoing campus conversations and to serve as a liaison between each campus and the creative team.

¹ Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities.

² "The Executive Committee shall consist of the officers of the Association with the Executive Director of the Association [Gordon Bietz] and the Vice President for Education of the North American Division [Larry Blackmer] serving as ex officio members." The 2018-2020 officers are: President, Vinita Sauder; Vice President, Nate Brandstater; Secretary Weymouth Spence; Treasurer, Ken Shaw.