

Working Philosophy for Adventist Schools

Reaching Out to the Community

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In “A New Mission School Model: How Adventist Colleges and Universities Can Thrive and Fulfill Their Mission in the 21st Century,”¹ Don Williams describes the journey taken by Adventist University of Health Sciences in creating an environment that both honors Adventist standards and appeals to students from diverse backgrounds. In speaking of the need to create schools that might not fit the traditional model of Adventist education, Williams references Ellen White who stated:

no exact picture can be given for the establishment of schools in new fields. The climate, the surroundings, the condition of the country, and the means at hand with which to work must all bear a part in shaping the work (CT, p. 531). (1985, pp. 18, 19)²

With the New Mission School Model, Adventist University of Health Sciences has created a fresh approach to Adventist education which presents Adventism in an appealing manner while retaining the important principles of our faith. Williams likens this approach to the “centered vs. bounded sets” as described by Frost and Hirsch in “The Shaping of Things to Come.”³ Bounded sets, by nature, are designed to keep some items within a boundary and other things out, much like private schools with a refuge mentality. Centered sets, on the other hand, present an appealing draw, attracting those who value what it has to offer. Williams states:

The adoption of the centered set within an educational model has important implications. Institutions using this approach view their students not in terms of whether they are in or out of the church, but whether they want to move closer in their relationship with God.⁴

¹ Don Williams.

² Ellen White.

³ Frost and Hirsch.

⁴ Williams.

What Adventist University of Health Sciences has successfully accomplished on the collegiate level, Adventist education on the elementary and secondary levels can emulate in building innovative models. With this framework in mind, I recommend the following two pillars as an undergirding philosophy:

1. ***Our school will always maintain the highest Adventist standards in the most appealing light.*** Our board, administration, faculty and staff will represent Adventism with pride, striving for personal excellence and joyful adherence to the tenets of our faith.
2. ***Our school will not impose the Adventist sub-culture on students nor assume that others must practice or believe in the same way that we do.*** All rules and school policies will be grounded in a moral and reasonable grace-oriented, spiritual philosophy. We will treat our students with dignity, respect theological differences, and hold our campus to high spiritual standards.

These two statements provide the two pillars that will keep our unique Mission School model from straying too far afield on either side. As a Seventh-day Adventist school looking to maintain our uniqueness while reaching out to our community, it is our desire to provide a desirable Christian school experience that is neither rigid nor exclusive. Our goal is two-fold:

- 1.) To attract diverse families to our school
- 2.) To present to the community all that is positive and appealing about the Seventh-day Adventist faith.