La Sierra University released a report on the Adventist Accreditation Association’s visit of last fall. According to the report, AAA thinks LSU “should receive the maximum accreditation possible under AAA guidelines.” The AAA team gave 32 commendations. Larry Becker notes three of those commendations in his report: 1) The University Studies Council for developing and refining the University Studies curriculum; 2) the School of Education administration for developing, implementing, and distributing the results of the CognitiveGenesis project; 3) Office of Integrated Marketing for implementing the new communication initiative, including a new logo, website, brand identity and communication tools, etc.

Becker also reports AAA will return to LSU no later than December 31, 2012, to reexamine campus progress on four major recommendations. The most notable recommendation states the administration and faculty enhance the “classroom for students and faculty with traditional Adventist views, seeking balance by presenting a range of views and supporting student expression according to the principles of academic freedom.”

“The full Adventist Accrediting Association board will receive the team’s report during its April 2011 meeting, and make the final decision on La Sierra’s term of accreditation.”

Something not mentioned in the report by Becker is news AAA insisted LSU send their faculty to other Adventist universities to learn how to present creationism. At least four universities have been contacted to see if they would be willing to participate, according to reports from university faculty. It’s been confirmed that Southwestern Adventist University was not contacted at the time of this article. Educate Truth contacted a few of the other universities, but received no official comment.

UPDATE 2/10/2011: Contrary to reports that AAA insisted LSU send their faculty to other universities to learn how to present creationism, Educate Truth has learned the idea originated with the LSU Provost’s office.
By Larry Becker
Executive Director, University Relations

A team of Seventh-day Adventist education leaders representing the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) concludes that “in their opinion, and subject to AAA approval, La Sierra University should receive the maximum accreditation possible under AAA guidelines.” This is an accreditation for a period of 5 years plus, an additional three years to match the regional WASC accrediting term to December 31, 2018. The 10-member team’s recommendation follows their five-day visit to the La Sierra campus in November 2010. La Sierra University administration received the team’s final report February 1.

The 10-member team included:

- Niels-Erik Andreasen, Andrews University president, chair
- Lisa Beardsley, General Conference education director; secretary
- Linda Wysong Becker, vice president, Union College
- Michael Cafferky, professor, Southern Adventist University
- Sabrina Cotton, vice president, Oakwood University
- Willie Hucks, General Conference associate Ministerial secretary
- Helen King, dean emeritus, Loma Linda University
- David Steen, Andrews University biology department chair
- Alberto Timm, Latin American Adventist Theological Seminary rector
- Larry Blackmer, North American Division vice president for education, served as the team’s advisor.

The final report contains 32 commendations and 22 recommendations for the university. The team considers three commendations and four of their recommendations as major. The team’s three major commendations for the campus include:

- The University Studies Council and associate faculty for vision and creativity for developing and refining the University Studies curriculum (especially the group of “core courses”). The curriculum is central to the institution’s effort to deploy its mission for all undergraduate students.
- The administration, School of Education administration, and the director of the CognitiveGenesis Research Office for developing, implementing, and distributing the results of the CognitiveGenesis project, one of the most comprehensive research projects in the world on academic achievement in Seventh-day Adventist education in North America.
- The board, administration, and Office of Integrated Marketing for implementing the new communication initiative, including a new logo,
website, brand identity and communication tools, etc. The brand signature was effectively used even in the well organized Self Study.

The final report included a call for an interim campus visit by AAA representatives to be completed no later than December 31, 2012, to reexamine campus progress on these four major recommendations, which are:

- **Administration and faculty enhance the LSU “open minds” brand and classroom climate for students and faculty with traditional Adventist views, seeking balance by presenting a range of views and supporting student expression according to the principles of academic freedom. In particular, the biology and religion faculty, in collaboration with the faculty of the University Studies core courses curriculum, should seek ways to support the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in an “open” manner and monitor effectiveness through program review.**

- **The administration, faculty, and campus ministries staff update the Spiritual Master Plan based on broad-based campus participation, identifying outcomes and measures (such as a revised college-level Valuegenesis survey), and include specific goals for non-SDA students.**

- **The board review its own governance structure and function to enhance:**
  - Orientation of board members to the board policy manual that outlines board responsibilities and procedures.
  - Consistency with procedures whereby the board and University approve new programs; process personnel, faculty candidates and administrators; and approve other major changes.
  - Efficacy of the board’s own internal self-governance, including board education, board evaluation, and overall effectiveness in dealing with central issues facing educational programs and services.
  - Appropriate use of “executive session” and to develop or revise the criteria that determine whether an agenda item should be considered in executive versus open session.
  - Assignment to the university administration at the levels of provost, dean and department chair the responsibility to mentor new faculty into campus ethos, and the educational mission of the institution and Adventist education in general.

- **The board and administration develop and implement a strategy to resolve the creation-evolution controversy, rebuild the reputation of the university, and regain the confidence of the constituency.**

“*We are sincerely grateful for the thoughtful way that the team carried out their study visit,*” says Randal Wisbey, La Sierra University president. “They listened carefully to our students, faculty, and staff as they sought to understand our mission as a Seventh-day Adventist university. I am pleased that the team is
recommending a full accreditation term. We at La Sierra University look forward to continuing to serve the Church’s vital educational mission as we move into the future.”

The full Adventist Accrediting Association board will receive the team’s report during its April 2011 meeting, and make the final decision on La Sierra’s term of accreditation.