La Sierra University gets 3-year AAA Accreditation

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La Sierra University gets 3-year AAA Accreditation

Excerpts from an article by Mark Kellner in *Adventist News*:

La Sierra University, a Seventh-day Adventist-owned educational institution in Riverside, California, received a three-year accreditation through 2016, following a vote by the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) board, meeting Wednesday, October 9, in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The maximum term granted for accreditation is five years, Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, director of education for the Seventh-day Adventist world church and chair of the AAA board, said. The three-year accreditation was granted following an April 2013 AAA committee’s report of “good progress” by La Sierra administrators in addressing items brought to their attention during a 2010 AAA site visit. The AAA action Wednesday also specified that another “focused visit” — the terms of which Beardsley-Hardy did not specify — would take place after the first year of the new accreditation term...

The La Sierra accreditation decision was made after “a thorough and careful deliberation,” Beardsley-Hardy said. She also expressed “optimism that they [La Sierra] will continue to make progress.”...

The accreditation issue — which includes denominational recognition by the Church and qualifies a school for certain appropriations from denominational funds — arose following a two-year controversy over La Sierra’s teachings on human origins. Beginning in 2009, critics, including some church leaders, laypersons and LSU students claimed that the school taught the theory of evolution to biology students as the explanation for the origin of life. (See, April 15, 2010, page 8.)

This AAA accreditation is especially interesting in light of the October 13 commendation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

The WASC commendations to La Sierra University included:

- La Sierra’s constructive process to address how the curriculum presents the interface of faith and science in ways that balance the school’s faith-based commitments and responsible academic inquiry.
- Consistency in adherence to university policies regarding faculty governance while also demonstrating responsible governance by the administration and board of trustees.
- Implementation of creative solutions to curriculum issues in biology and general studies in ways that honor both instruction in Church doctrine and academically sound science education.

**WASC Visiting Team Commends La Sierra For Revisions to University Governance Practices**

In other words, the WASC team was pleased by the creation of additional school autonomy or separation from church governance and oversight — and the schools continued teaching and promotion of Darwinian evolution in its science courses.

In this light, the claims of “progress at LSU” coming from AAA would be more encouraging if specific details as to what progress has been made in support of the Seventh-day Adventist position on origins, in particular, were listed. As it currently stands, LSU still maintains ardent evolutionary biologists on its staff, to include the head of the biology department — Lee Grismer. LSU has also hired on additional evolutionary biologists for this school year. Many of the professors even within the religion department favor the Darwinian perspective on origins and promote a theistic form of Darwinian evolution. These biology and religion professors do not support and do not teach their students to appreciate the Adventist perspective on origins — that all life on this planet was created during a literal 7-day creation week. Rather, they continue to teach and promote the neo-Darwinian perspective, in perhaps a bit more subtle and guarded manner, that life has
existed and evolved on this planet for hundreds of millions of years.

In short, where is the lecture material from LSU that is being presented to the students in active support of the Adventist position on origins? If this is in hand, I would love to publish this evidence in favor of LSU’s “progress”.