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15 Jun 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States...Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

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The move is expected to provide increased collaboration among Adventist educational institutions and lend Griggs the opportunity to benefit from the faculty base and increased resources for curriculum development at Andrews, church leaders said.

World church Vice President Ella Simmons said the move would bring "fundamental" changes to Griggs, providing "valuable support and opportunities" for the institution.

"Both [Griggs and Andrews] will grow from this alliance; their capacity to provide education from a distance will increase in substantive ways," Simmons said.

Currently, veteran Adventist educator and academic administrator Alayne Thorpe is serving as interim president of Griggs University. Once Griggs University relocates to the Berrien Springs, Michigan campus, Thorpe will continue to helm the institution in her capacity as recently appointed dean of Distance Education for Andrews University.

"We see this merger with Andrews as a prime opportunity to expand the mission -- not only of Griggs, but of Andrews -- to make Adventist education available to students everywhere," Thorpe said, citing plans to expand the institution's online programs and collaborations.

The move from world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, to what is currently the church's Lake Union Conference building adjacent to Andrews' entrance is expected by mid-July, Thorpe said. Andrews recently purchased the conference building in preparation for the relocation, a June press release from the university said. Later, Lake Union administration will move to a site more suited to their staff and the building will be renamed.

The church's top administrative body voted to transfer Griggs' oversight last October after the distance education commission established in 2009 found that the Griggs' limited resources could not handle the church's distance education needs. Shortly thereafter, Andrews' board accepted the transfer of both Griggs University and Griggs International Academy.

"Griggs needed an academic home with resources, such as a talented faculty and versatile library facilities," Thorpe said. "These were just not available to us in the General Conference headquarters building."

Currently, 4,500 students are enrolled in Griggs, with enrollment highest in the institution's MBA program. About 1,000 Griggs students are enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, and 2,000 more are taking college courses.

Thorpe said Griggs anticipates significant enrollment growth in grades 9 through 12, thanks to a new commitment to distance learning technologies and the expansion of a partnership with Tob...