
Beyond Moving: The Merging of Loma Linda University

by Jean and Maynard Lowry

On May 9, 1988, Gruen Associates, a group of planners, economic consultants, and civil engineers, presented a progress report on land-use potential to the Loma Linda University Board of Trustees. The report shocked the university administration and the Board of Trustees. Money, new money, *a lot* of new money is in the university's future, and several pieces of property are ripe for development. Property owned by the university in the Banning and Beaumont area promise revenues not previously included in projections of the University's future. The report states that "there is tremendous potential for developing these properties to produce a return to the university that will not only provide an adequate basis for funding the unification of the university but will also provide an excellent endowment in the future for the operations of the university."

Three months earlier, on January 12, 1988, the university board of trustees voted to consolidate the two campuses of the university on the Loma Linda campus. While earlier land-use proposals had covered the agricultural land and campus located in Riverside (La Sierra), the Gruen Associates report followed a broader directive to take a comprehensive, strategic approach to the total development of all real estate assets of the university. These assets include more than 1,600 acres

in four locations in Banning, Beaumont, Loma Linda, and Riverside, California.

The operative word of the Gruen report is "future." Land development is a long-term proposition. In the meantime the university faces a decade of conserving and maintaining institutional resources in financially uncertain times. Short-term survival continues to depend on stemming the tide of declining enrollment, halting further program cuts, and maintaining support from the Pacific Union Conference and the General Conference. Much of the decade will be spent simply surviving; it must also be a decade of planning.

Loma Linda University's future now includes options that were pipe dreams only months ago. Those options could include maintaining two campuses, lowering tuition and/or providing scholarships, paying faculty salaries comparable to peers in the public sector, or building new facilities and equipping laboratories, or some combination of several options. For example, although preliminary plans are for land development rather than land sale, the university owns one large parcel that, if sold now would provide an immediate endowment that would rank Loma Linda University 140th among endowed higher-education institutions in the United States. Increases in scholarships and salaries would allow the university to attract students and faculty nationwide. Financial opportunities will reshape Loma Linda University, but only clear vision and superior leadership will make University President Norman Woods' dream of a "good, small, comprehensive university" a reality.

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Meanwhile, attention continues to be focused on moving, rather than merger. In its August 1988 meeting the board of trustees is expected to affirm its resolve to move the La Sierra campus. A constituency meeting of the university could then be called as early as mid-1989 to vote on this issue. Woods has stated that if the constituency

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rejects the board action the La Sierra campus will not move to Loma Linda. However, the constituency is expected to approve the move.

The university constituency is roughly divided into thirds, with one-third representation each from the General Conference, the Pacific Union Conference, and the university/alumni. In the past, members representing the General Conference and the union have voted as a block; but given growing differences between the two groups, it is likely that the past will not be repeated in the upcoming meeting. Predictions are that the General Conference members will support moving the La Sierra campus, while the union will oppose the move. The remaining one-third, the university/alumni members, may make the critical difference. Understating the potentially volatile issue, Woods notes that the selection of this latter group may be "highly politicized."

The university will not reach its potential if it does not satisfactorily grapple with two key issues. The first is the merger of the two campuses into a single functional unit; the second is the physical move of the La Sierra campus. The financial future of the institution will influence both issues. The university no longer faces financial pressures to merge or move, but the faculty, administration, board, and constituency will continue to analyze and debate both merger and moving.

It may be a surprise to some who are not well acquainted with Loma Linda University to learn that merger between La Sierra College and Loma Linda University has not been accomplished. On April 23, 1967, the constituency voted "the unification of Loma Linda University and La Sierra College as one organically integrated and consolidated institution as of July 1, 1967," and specified the complete implementation of the merger not later than September 1968. The General Conference and the Pacific Union were to continue to support the institution financially with plans being "worked out to unify all areas of the new merged balance sheet."

The new board of trustees met for the first time on April 24, 1967. But it failed to implement the mandate for merger given by the constituency. Since 1967 each campus of Loma Linda University has retained its own budget, sources of funding, salary schedules, general-education requirements, student affairs, admissions policies, and offices, and a federated group of separate alumni associations representing each school. Despite constituency action two decades ago, administrative separateness still prevails.

Today, the relationship between the campuses that compose Loma Linda University follows more closely the description of a federation. Federations are often formed between a larger university and a smaller liberal arts college. The college is given "institutional identity and autonomy in terms of name, programs, faculty, and facilities." Federated colleges may have an interlocking board of trustees and/or a single central administration, while at the same time the identity and autonomy of each member of the federation remains intact.

The nature of Loma Linda's current efforts to join the two campuses remains unclear, due in part to the language used to describe the process. At the outset, the university administration chose the descriptive term *consolidation* to describe the joining of its two campuses. However, as the outpouring of negative emotion associated with the process of consolidation became intertwined with the term, *unification* became the new byword. To quote one senior university administra-

tor, “*Consolidation* has a takeover ring to it while *unification* has a more cooperative, positive connotation.”

Unfortunately, changes in terminology have not added definition to the process. One poorly defined term has been substituted for another. In most instances, *unification* is used to indicate that the institution is moving several academic units into new facilities. Occasionally, it is used to imply that the institution is in fact merging disparate entities. While moving conveys the idea of transit and packing boxes, merger is a more complex idea with focus on mission and a unified purpose, identity, and voice. Merger may or may not be accompanied by a move that narrows the geographic distance between two previously separate entities. Even more important, physical proximity does not guarantee that merger will occur.

President Woods’ public presentations focus on moving issues: time lines, new buildings, street closings, and parking accommodations. He affirms the need for “unity” in the institution; a goal he feels can best be achieved by moving. He rarely speaks of merger, although in a paper presented to the board of trustees the university officers allude to merger by calling for a “full integration of professional and liberal arts curricula” while maintaining an “emphasis in medical and health sciences.”

What is envisioned by the university officers is a faculty that is “vitalized by ongoing research” while engaged in “masterful” teaching. The tight-rope that all institutions of higher education walk between teaching and research is certainly an issue of mission, but the dreams of university officers have not been widely shared with the faculties. Nor have the discussions begun that are necessary to make the dreams a reality.

The university officers’ paper implies that moving will result in “full integration,” or merger. According to Gail S. Chambers, research associate in higher education at the University of Rochester, the merger of two educational institutions “needs to move through an increasingly accurate and balanced understanding of (1) what the new place can be, (2) who will move it to fruition, and (3) what will be needed in structure and resources

to support the plan. In other words: the new institution’s mission, advocacy, and feasibility.” To date the university officers and the institution’s Strategic Planning Committee have focused too much attention on the feasibility of moving the La Sierra campus. Merger has received only incidental attention.

According to Hugh L. Thompson, chancellor of Indiana University at Kokomo, certain conditions are conducive to merger: (1) The physical distance between the institutions should not be great. (2) There should have been some previous cooperation prior to merger. (3) The academic programs offered should be complementary rather than duplicative. (4) Academic excellence should increase as the result of merger. (5) There should be common political interests. Loma Linda University meets all five criteria. Ironically, these factors were in place in 1967 when a number of decisions were made that prevented a genuine administrative merger of the two campuses.

The financial relationship and practices of the campuses are fundamental to continuing divisions within the institution. There has never been a “merged” balance sheet. University administrators carefully maintain two independent financial entities, and the board of trustees approves separate budgets for each campus. Departments that

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serve both campuses, such as the school of religion, the library, and the records office, develop and maintain separate budgets and accounting for their operations on the respective campuses.

Beyond these separate accounting procedures, different budgetary philosophies prevail on the two campuses. The Loma Linda campus is a financial consortium made up of central administration and the schools. Each entity has its own financial base. Central administration’s financial

base is the General Conference subsidy, overhead payments from funded research, and a payment from the La Sierra campus. The financial base for the schools is tuition. Each school retains all tuition funds generated by the faculty of that school. On the La Sierra campus there is no consortium. The Pacific Union subsidy, tuition income, and any industry income or loss are the financial base for the campus. Each school on the La Sierra campus receives its operating funds from the campus budget without a direct reference to the amount of tuition it generates.

The Loma Linda campus budgetary procedures are school oriented; on the La Sierra campus they are campus oriented. For 20 years university administrators have lived with these incompatible budgetary philosophies and practices that have only reinforced separation between the campuses and thwarted merger. While the rhetoric has been that of a merged institution, the reality has been a federated institution.

Joan B. Cannon, who studied a state-mandated merger of two institutions, warns of the damaging effect of a discrepancy between rhetoric and action. Prior to merger a consultant identified certain areas of concern including: "(1) College X would only agree to a marriage of equals merger; (2) College Y feared that their reputation would be tarnished as a result of merging with College X; (3) a latent distrust and rivalry existed between members of the two institutions . . ." Merger was recommended, despite these areas of difficulty. Decisions made during the merger made it clear that a "merger-acquisition" was occurring, with College X being acquired. For nearly two years following the merger the institution continued to have "disparate and inequitable working conditions, tenure and reward systems, and salary schedules." The delay in resolving these inequities resulted in reports of "job dissatisfaction, merger anxiety, role tension, and merger dissatisfaction." This was especially true for College X

The Case for Moving as Well as Merging

by Ron Graybill

Loma Linda University has a choice: to keep doing what we have been doing—operating an average college and an average cluster of health-related professional schools—or to become a truly good small university, a place to which Adventist young people can look for quality training that will enable them to carry out the mission of the church.

I believe that if Loma Linda University is ever to fulfill its mission to prepare Adventist young people for service, it must not only continue to serve "average students"; it must also offer more help to educationally disadvantaged or poorly equipped young people and a better-quality educa-

tion to talented high achievers. Elitism, however, should not be the method for achieving excellence.

Such academic excellence will best be achieved on a single campus, for a number of reasons. The integration of academic programs on a single campus will give liberal-arts classes a larger student pool on which to draw and will help broaden the experience of the professional students. For example, fine-arts students will have a larger audience for their talents and split programs (such as social relations) will be unified. Students studying Adventist history will have more ready access to the Ellen G. White Branch Office.

Unifying the campuses will allow the La Sierra academic entities to be considered truly a part of a single university instead of being looked on as merely another senior college, separated from the so-called "main" campus by 20 miles. It will increase the commitment of the undergraduate faculty to research, thus enriching their classroom work and increasing the value of the degrees the university offers. Moving will also improve chances of bringing faculty salaries into parity, which will help the university recruit and retain a higher-quality teaching force.

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respondents.

Loma Linda University has lived with inequities for 20 years while telling the faculty, students, and constituents that it is one university. This discrepancy between talk and action has cost university management much credibility. The board of trustees recently attempted to redress the heritage of mistrust by voting to promise that money from the La Sierra campus farm would benefit only the entities of the La Sierra campus and would not benefit the School of Medicine. Nevertheless, the faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences has requested that the university faculty senate explore the advisability of retaining legal counsel to ensure that their interests are protected within the university. Merger cannot occur amid such mistrust.

Nor can it occur without a change in the external constraints placed on the institution. Woods has identified pressure from the university's ex-

ternal publics as the greatest stumbling block to merger. Key sources of such external forces, such as the General Conference, the Pacific Union Conference, and sectors of the university's constituency, have insisted that the La Sierra campus conform to the operational policies and practices of the other North American SDA colleges.

Woods has indicated that this pressure is so intense that moving the La Sierra campus may be the necessary catalyst for the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Education at La Sierra to be able to conform to policies governing the rest of the university, rather than remaining tied to policies governing other Adventist colleges. Given past attitudes, that may be too optimistic.

For example, at the first meeting of the board following La Sierra College becoming a part of Loma Linda University, April 24, 1963, it was voted to appoint a small committee to "work out" wage differences between the La Sierra and Loma Linda campuses. That was not accomplished.

The students' social experience will also be enhanced. Hundreds of undergraduates currently study on the Loma Linda campus where their choices for a life companion are limited to other health professionals. Bringing the College of Arts and Sciences and the Schools of Education and Business to Loma Linda will allow all students a wider choice.

More than half of the students currently at La Sierra are enrolled in programs leading to careers in health. If they were on the Loma Linda campus, they would have ready access to the large health library there. They would also have greater opportunities to work in jobs related to their interests.

Some have expressed concern about the impact of unification on the university's spiritual health, but I find it hard to believe that the institution's commitment to spiritual principles or its spiritual atmosphere will be substantially altered by a 20-mile move.

Not only will academic programs be enhanced and student life enriched by unification, but administration of the university will also improve and become more efficient. The current physical distance between the campuses is both a symbol and a cause of an unhealthy level of suspicion and distrust within the university. A unified campus will allow

for more frequent and convenient consultation and for more rapid, effective communication. Naturally, being on one campus will not solve all administrative problems, but it will make some of them easier to solve.

Finally, financial issues must be considered. It is undoubtedly true that if the La Sierra campus were maintained and the farm land at La Sierra properly developed, there would be a greater initial amount of money available for endowments and scholarships at La Sierra. But the university has no intention of dissipating the La Sierra assets if unification takes place. Moreover, long-term savings should result from campus unification. In the first place, there will be operational savings resulting from the elimination of duplicate services and facilities. But as the university becomes more truly united, fund-raising and marketing efforts will become more focused and efficient. This, together with the superior educational product a unified campus will allow us to offer, can lead to even greater long-term financial stability.

In short, I see a single-campus institution as the best, perhaps the only hope for genuine merger and unification. Twenty miles is not a long distance on a road map, but on our mental map of who we are and where we belong, those miles create an unbridgeable gap.

Now, when some departments are moved from the La Sierra to Loma Linda campuses, department faculty can and do receive pay increases. Nevertheless, Francis Wernick, past president of the board of trustees, has stated that the La Sierra campus faculty will not be moved to the Loma Linda campus wage scale "short of the Second Coming." Undoubtedly concerned about the fiscal impact internal merger of wages at Loma Linda would have on Pacific Union College, Thomas Mostert, current vice-president of the university's board of trustees and president of the Pacific Union Conference, believes that moving the La Sierra campus to Loma Linda will not alter the La Sierra campus faculty wage scale. Despite such past and present board opposition to merger on the issue of faculty wages, Woods has not abandoned the goal of an equalized wage scale.

Merger should have occurred in 1967. The dissonance within the university today is due, in part, to the institution's unwillingness to acknowledge that merger failed. It is time for the university's external publics to support the faculties in their efforts to merge successfully, whether

or not this involves moving.

Gail Chambers encourages the faculties of merging institutions to begin as friends. She notes that, "The personal demands of a merger attempt are best met when two presidents can stand toe to toe with one another and like what they see." Loma Linda University has only one president. It is the deans and the faculties who must argue and work together until they like what they see. It will not be easy. They must change a balkanized institution into a unified one.

Moving, while a more emotionally charged issue, is much simpler than merging. Institutions may be forced to move for financial reasons or choose to move to provide for a better future. In the case of Loma Linda University, finances do not necessitate a move. The decision to move the La Sierra campus has been made because the board of trustees, the university officers, and the Strategic Planning Committee believe that it will provide a better future for the institution. While moving may be only an incident in the life of an institution, Loma Linda University will not survive without merger.