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# Loma Linda—A Multiversity or a Health Science University?

by Ronald Graybill

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Hardly had the February meeting of the Loma Linda University Board of Trustees voted to end the effort to consolidate its two campuses when the university was plunged into new turmoil by its accrediting body, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). WASC slapped the university with a two-year probation in a March 7 report that registered eight major complaints about administrative and financial matters.

The university continues to be fully accredited during the probationary period. Its professional schools, including the La Sierra-based school of education, have secure accreditation from their own specialized accrediting bodies.

Of the two dozen campuses WASC examined under its new guidelines, only three received full and clear accreditation. While Loma Linda has been the only institution placed on probation, other schools have suffered worse fates under the new WASC guidelines.

Probation is no small matter to Loma Linda University, especially because of the high public profile of the medical center and medical school. As Medical Center President and University Vice-President for Medical Affairs David Hinshaw put it,

When information goes out into the public arena that seems to question Loma Linda University this confuses

a whole collection of audiences. We immediately begin to get questions like “Has the hospital lost its accreditation?” No, not at all. Well, “Has the medical school lost its accreditation?” No, not at all. Still, anything that happens at “Loma Linda” is perceived as something having to do with these health-related entities, so any sort of disturbance that arises anywhere within the institution tends to cause difficulty for those entities that have more public visibility.

The La Sierra campus took WASC’s findings very seriously too. At a time when enrollment was stabilizing or even increasing, probation could create potential recruitment and retention problems. If probation led to a complete split in the university, faculty flight would be a very real threat, with diminished leverage in hiring replacements.

Medical-school personnel at Loma Linda noticed that the spectre of accreditation problems was causing at least some bright students with acceptances to several medical schools to rank Loma Linda lower in their list of options. Probation threatened fund-raising efforts as well as the medical school’s research programs, since new grants would be harder to come by when competition is already so keen. Officials are also worried that major affiliations with foreign governments and universities may be in jeopardy.

In a matter of weeks, a university whose administration had been planning hopefully for new levels of cooperation and coordination was transformed into a collection of individual schools promoting the need for greater levels of autonomy and independence. At least most of the Loma Linda campus schools wanted more independ-

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Ron Graybill, associate professor of church history at Loma Linda University, was elected by the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences on the La Sierra campus as their moderator. He also served on the university-wide strategic planning committee reviewing all plans for consolidation.

ence. “The strength of the university is in its individual schools,” said Judson Klooster, dean of the school of dentistry.

The board was called back for a special meeting on April 20 to consider the university’s response to the WASC report. At that meeting the board voted for a “single university on two campuses,” but opted to change the structure of the university sufficiently to allow for the Loma Linda and La Sierra campuses to be accredited separately. The move was necessary, Neal Wilson told the press, “to ensure that the mission of the professional schools located on the Loma Linda campus would not in any way be limited, diluted, or weakened by the needs, challenges or problems faced by the La Sierra campus entities.”

To the La Sierra campus faculty and administration it appeared they were being scapegoated. The “marriage” that brought the two campuses together in 1967 was said to have never really worked. Reflecting on the experience of living through the consolidation debate only to be confronted with this new reality, Rick Rice, a La Sierra-based professor in the school of religion, said, “It’s a little like going to bed while your parents are arguing about moving to a new house and waking up to hear them say they had never really been married.”

But the rapid switch from consolidation to separation is not all that difficult to understand. Observers on both campuses point to the debate over consolidation itself as one contributing cause. Most La Sierra campus administrators and faculty members had been passive if not mildly skeptical about consolidation, although a few were vocal on one side or the other. But if most of the faculty was uncertain, groups of activists in the La Sierra Adventist community were not. They, along with some faculty supporters, expressed their opposition in terms that can only be considered antagonistic to the university’s central administration and the Loma Linda campus.

Thus WASC’s probation landed on a university that was already fractured in spirit. The board had recognized this at its February meeting and had set up a Task Force on University Structure under the chairmanship of Lowell Bock, a General Conference field secretary, to explore ways

to help the two campuses function together more harmoniously, or, failing that, to consider splitting them. The WASC report and subsequent board action in favor of separate accreditation left the Bock committee with a narrowed assignment. Now their task was merely to work out the structural changes necessary for separate accreditation and report back to the June 22 board meeting. The committee met twice, then its chairman departed for a previously scheduled vacation. They would hold a final session just before the board meeting.

**B**ut consolidation was not the only factor fueling the impulse for greater separation between the campuses. Ken Matthews, chairman of the university-wide faculty senate, had aroused considerable ill-will toward the La Sierra campus with a letter he had written to WASC the previous November, but which did not begin to circulate widely until February. In his letter Matthews complained about what he saw as a lack of administrative support for faculty governance and the faculty senate, and spoke of other moves he saw as efforts to stifle faculty participation in the life of the university.

Once they got wind of the Matthews letter,

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most of the schools on the Loma Linda campus condemned it with votes of their faculties. The school of medicine went even further, voting to recall all their senators and, since it was clear that the senate constitution provided for recall, the school also asked its senators to resign.

When one of WASC’s eight complaints cited the university for lack of support for faculty governance, the blame for that citation was quickly placed on the La Sierra campus. La Sierra faculty pointed out, however, that Matthews was elected to the senate as a representative of the university-wide graduate school, that he wrote without au-

thorization by the senate, and that he garnered some support for his complaints from Loma Linda campus senators, including the previous chairperson of the senate and the chair-elect, the latter being a senator from the school of medicine. They also noted that the WASC report specifically said the university had had the same difficulty when WASC visited the campuses in 1983.

Still, the fact that Matthews' appointment was in the college English department and that some college faculty backed up his complaints, together with the fact that the campus faculty did not vote to disassociate itself from Matthews' actions, tarred the faculties of all four schools on the La Sierra campus with the same brush. It did not

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help the Loma Linda campus's perception of the La Sierra campus when Matthews followed up his WASC letter with two more missives, full of accusations against two Loma Linda-based administrators.

But the real issue for the Loma Linda campus was Matthews' apparent willingness to risk the entire university's name by taking grievances to WASC, when there were, in their view, many avenues of redress unused within the university. What was more, the concerns Matthews voiced seemed remote and unreal to the large clinical faculty of the medical school, whose interest in "faculty governance" was said to be minimal at best.

College Dean Anees A. Haddad believes that what seems to some to be the college faculty's general discontent with university administration needs to be seen against the background of four years of retrenchment, when dozens of positions were eliminated and several programs and departments shut down. This "human tragedy," he said, created an "ambiance of mistrust, fear, insecurity, and demoralization," even among those who survived the cuts.

Once they began to study the WASC report, Loma Linda campus leaders saw other reasons why separate accreditation seemed necessary. WASC noted that while most professors and some administrators on the Loma Linda campus were paid on a par with their peers outside the institution, La Sierra campus faculty received some of the lowest salaries in the state. Not only did WASC see this as inconsistent, they believed it made it difficult for La Sierra to hire needed faculty.

University President Norman Woods saw this wage differential as the chief "need, challenge, and problem" to which Neal Wilson had referred in his press statement. The problem seemed intractable for two reasons: there was not enough money available to pay teachers at parity with their peers in non-SDA institutions, and even if Loma Linda University had the money, paying the La Sierra faculty more than was paid at other Adventist colleges might disrupt the entire North American system of higher education.

David Hinshaw argues further that even if La Sierra might be able to solve the problem to WASC's satisfaction, negative publicity about the debate would be damaging to the medical school and medical center.

But the La Sierra campus was not so pessimistic about the faculty salary issue. In the long run, there was a massive potential endowment for the campus lying just across the street under 300 acres of alfalfa on what was once the college farm. This land, in an area of skyrocketing land values, could eventually solve many of La Sierra's problems.

In the near term, General Conference President Neal Wilson had hinted several times at the need to sever professorial from ministerial wage scales, and Pacific Union Conference President Tom Mostert suggested that if the denomination would take into account the true cost of housing on the West Coast and pay its employees according to these costs, salaries could rise within existing pay scales. The only catch was that long-standing practices in the transfer and allocation of funds would have to be altered to foot the bill.

But Loma Linda saw another advantage to distancing itself from La Sierra. Along with

faculty governance and salaries, the university was also cited for conflicts of interest on the board of trustees. Some trustees served as presidents of competing institutions, others served on the boards of competing institutions. But since most of the health-professional schools did not have competition elsewhere in the Adventist system, most of these conflicts would disappear for the Loma Linda campus if it were separated from La Sierra.

For their part, representatives of the La Sierra campus pointed to several of the WASC findings which were, it appeared to them, much more applicable to the Loma Linda campus than to their own. WASC's observation that a "failure to integrate the various academic plans has adversely affected the effectiveness of the University and given rise to a confusing array of priorities and processes," seemed to La Sierra campus observers to strike at the high degree of autonomy and

independence cherished by the health-professional schools.

As might be expected on this point, Medical Center President David Hinshaw and University President Norman Woods expressed somewhat different perspectives. Hinshaw, noting WASC's complaint on the lack of central planning, said: "Yes, but these things are the way the schools want them, and the way the board has for many years authorized them to be. So that it appears that there may have been some concern in some areas of the central administration that the schools were too autonomous on this campus, but the degree of autonomy that they have is something which they treasure."

When asked about that view, Woods, smiling, observed that it was proverbial for professional schools to cherish independence. "They are constantly going to test the outer limits of that independence," he said.

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## Loma Linda University Postpones Action on Separation Until August

In the days just before the June 22 meeting of the Loma Linda University board of trustees, Neal Wilson, the chairman of the board and the president of the General Conference of SDA, consulted all of the deans on the Loma Linda campus. Wilson found them solidly supporting a total separation of the two campuses. He also attended the final meeting of the planning committee chaired by Lowell Bock, a vice-chairman of the university board of trustees. The committee discovered that legal difficulties had arisen with some of the models they had been studying. In the end, the Bock committee made no recommendations at all to the board.

At the board meeting itself, the two campuses were clearly heard. During the morning representatives of the Loma Linda University Medical Center, the medical faculty practice groups, and Dean Lyn Behrens of the school of medicine presented and discussed with the board the case for total separation. In the afternoon, La Sierra Campus provost, R. Dale McCune, the deans of that campus, and Dave Osborne, university vice-president for student affairs, presented and discussed the case for remaining a single university.

University President Norman Woods made no specific recommendation, but indicated later that it was probably clear from the questions he raised that he was leaning in the direction of separation.

Kay Andersen, former executive director of WASC, was present and told the board that, although he no longer spoke for WASC, it was his opinion that, given the different missions of the two campuses, the university should give separation serious consideration.

The board did take one vote related to the separation issue. It voted to dissolve the university-wide faculty senate and asked the university to develop separate plans for faculty governance on the two campuses.

By the end of the day, it was clear to Wilson that the board was still not ready to make a final decision. He spoke of the need for better understanding between the General Conference and the Pacific Union before taking a final vote. No official action was taken on the main issue, because it was clear that a one-day meeting simply did not allow enough time to weigh all the factors. Consequently, board members were asked to set aside August 27-29 for a three-day board meeting, probably in a retreat setting.

But WASC is going to ask certain questions about how everything is integrated and functioning. . . . We must think about a learning diagram which will allow cross-fertilization to happen in a university. When we're doing what a university does and we're claiming university status, they're going to measure us against that claim.

Not only is lack of joint planning a special challenge for the Loma Linda campus; WASC also said it had "serious doubts regarding the financial stability of the university." La Sierra points to its balanced budget last year and to its improved enrollment picture and observes that the Loma Linda campus clearly has the greater difficulty here, since the budgets of some of the health-professional schools are seriously out of balance. According to Hinshaw, the medical center may hold the key to solving this problem.

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By using its larger and thus more cost-efficient services to cover the needs of the health-professional schools, Hinshaw believes the budgets can be balanced.

Despite the differing opinions as to which entities of the university are to blame and which may have the most difficulty in addressing the issues WASC raised, there is a high level of determination on both campuses that the challenges can be met, and an eagerness to get at the task of meeting them. On both campuses committees were soon at work on various aspects of WASC's report.

As the June 22 board meeting approached, the university was in suspense. Would there still be one Loma Linda University on two campuses? Or would La Sierra be severed completely, losing even the name, "Loma Linda University"?

Up until its final meeting before the June 22 board, the Bock committee had been leaning

toward recommending that the university board be split into two operating boards for the separate campuses, with two presidents to run the campuses. At first they had also envisioned a university chancellor to be responsible to a combined "super" board, which would meet but once a year to consider broad policy issues. The chancellor's office would also oversee a number of "bridging" functions, services, or schools, such as the school of religion, which would serve both campuses.

A later meeting of the Bock committee considered abandoning the chancellor in favor of a "council of equals" to operate shared services. This appealed to the professional schools, which saw a chancellor's office as simply adding unnecessary expense. But later, both chairman of the board Neal Wilson and vice-chairman Tom Mostert expressed misgivings about trying to operate a university without one chief executive to hold accountable. But could any one person be held responsible for two campuses that were increasingly being seen as too diverse for meaningful cooperation?

Then there was the question of the name—"Loma Linda University." The Loma Linda campus had carried the name alone from 1961 through 1967 when La Sierra joined the university. Hinshaw argued that the name was, after all, geographical. What is more, in most people's minds it conjured up the image of the medical center and the medical school. Finally, Brian Bull, chairman of the pathology department of the medical school, explained that for the Loma Linda campus, the willingness of some La Sierra faculty to put the name at risk by fighting their battles with the administration in the public press and before WASC, made the Loma Linda campus wonder if La Sierra faculty really cared about the name or realized how potentially damaging the actions of some of their colleagues had been.

On the other hand, La Sierra students, even those in the humanities, observed that the name was part of what attracted them to the institution. In a tuition-driven institution, the marketing problems created by a name change were also seen as substantial.

La Sierra Campus provost Dale McCune explained the importance of the name to the La

Sierra faculty.

“This faculty has always considered itself faculty of Loma Linda University,” he said.

They were hired that way, and although their contribution has not been as splashy as that of others, there

are many of them who have worked hard for years in their respective disciplines to enhance the name and reputation of Loma Linda University.

As the June 22 board meeting approached, the campuses waited expectantly.