

Chalking Up a Good Week

There was good news aplenty for Seventh-day Adventist academics the first week in February. After several months of speculation and comment about the handbook prepared by the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) (*Spectrum*, autumn 2001), there were actions suggesting that this controversial document, which had been released in September, 2001, would not be directly implemented in North America, either at union colleges or at General Conference institutions—Andrews University, Loma Linda University, Oakwood College, Griggs University, and Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies.

First, the Administrative Committee of the General Conference voted to appoint a new task force called the General Conference Institutions' Ministerial and Theological

Education Task Force. This action placed a committee between those educational institutions and the IBMTE similar to what exists at the division level. In addition, it gave the task force the ability to recommend changes in the procedures.

News of this new task force brought a sigh of relief from many of the religion faculty at the General Conference institutions. Four terms of reference were voted for the task force:

1. Serve as the collective voice for General Conference institutions as they seek to implement the guidelines and procedures included in the *IBMTE Handbook*.
2. Review the guidelines and procedures included in the *IBMTE Handbook* and, if deemed appropriate, propose amendments that may have global application and strengthen ministerial and theological education.
3. Review the procedures included in the *IBMTE Handbook* and, if deemed appropriate, propose alternative procedures applicable to all General Conference institutions in accordance with *IBMTE Handbook* provisions.
4. Define and shape the character of the ongoing interface of General Conference institutions with the IBMTE.



Presidents of the Adventist colleges and universities in the United States pose for a historic photograph in February.

Front Row (left to right): *David Smith*, Union College; *Joseph Gurubatham*, Griggs University; *Richard Osborn*, Pacific Union College; *Lyn Behrens*, Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center; *Lawrence Geraty*, La Sierra University; *Niels-Erik Andreasen*, Andrews University.

Back Row (left to right): *Gordon Bietz*, Southern Adventist University; *Charles Scriven*, Kettering College of Medical Arts; *Randal Wisbey*, Columbia Union College; *David Greenlaw*, Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences; *Sylvan Lashley*, Atlantic Union College; *Delbert Baker*, Oakwood College; *Richard Hart*, Loma Linda University; *Clifford Sorensen*, Walla Walla College; and *Fred Thomas*, Southwestern Adventist University.

Given that the IBMTE became part of the Church's working policy when voted into existence in 1998, finding a way to make changes in procedures was challenging. An ad hoc meeting of the General Conference educational institution presidents, deans, and their representatives at the GC recommended to the Administrative Committee that the task force be formed.

Meanwhile, on the North American Division level, President Don Schneider named seven people to the division's Board of Ministerial and Theological Education after receiving suggestions first from the union conference presidents and then from the deans and chairs of the religion faculties. The resulting committee is composed of Don Schneider, chair, and members John McVay, Gordon Bietz, Warren Trenchard, Tom Mostert, Greg King, Zac Plantak, and David Thomas. At the board's first meeting, several participants came with recommendations on how to include the evaluation process in the already standing accreditation system rather than adding another layer of evaluation.

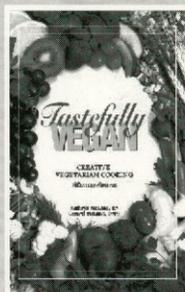
There was more good news that week when the presidents of the colleges and universities decided to establish a Commission on Cooperation during their annual meeting. Although the concept of cooperation had been considered before, this time a decision was made to fund and staff the commission and thereby bring the concept to life. The president's meeting was followed by a symposium on higher education. Each of the presidents spoke at this five-hour session, addressing topics such as academic excellence, character training, service, spirituality, and community involvement. With each new speech the vibrant contribution that the academic community makes to the Church became more clear. In a church formed to pursue present truth, the role of education is to keep that pursuit alive.

Since *Spectrum* had already planned additional coverage of the IBMTE before February, the editors wanted to report the good news, along with the following analysis.

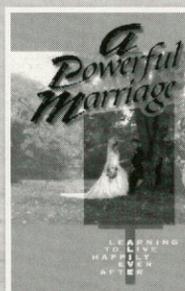
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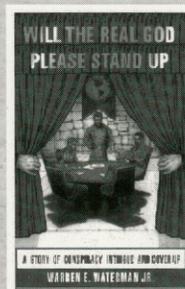
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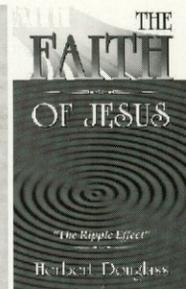
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