

Institute for Christian Teaching  
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**Integration of Faith and Learning through Curricular Design:  
Interdisciplinary, Team-taught General Education**

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### Introduction

In its more than one hundred year history, Adventist education has struggled to articulate what it means to be an “Adventist” college or university. While Ellen White devoted much of her counsel to education, summarized in her book *Education*, her concepts of centrality of the Bible, benefit of manual labor and importance of character have often been in tension with the church’s desire for recognition and accreditation (Bull and Lockhardt, 1989). Since the church is unwilling to reduce its expectations of accreditation and recognized prestige, the “blueprint” of Adventist education is often ignored. As a result, more often than not, we are unable to clearly articulate what we mean by “Adventist” education.

Nevertheless, we continue to strive for the unique combination that we call “Adventist Education”. We preach about it, we sacrifice for it, we worry about it, but we do not often know what it is. When pressed, we generally talk about required religion classes, participation in religious services (i.e. chapels, spiritual emphasis weeks), lifestyle expectations, Adventist faculty and a high percentage of Adventist students.

This paper focuses on an aspect of Adventist education that is common to all colleges and universities: religious instruction. It begins by reviewing the models used for religious instruction and nurturance in the general education curriculum. It then examines the questions and options that institutions must consider in reviewing how religion is expressed in the formal curriculum. Subsequently, it argues for an integrated curricular model that is interdisciplinary and team-taught. Finally, it explores the first steps of curricular reform. In addition, the appendices will include an example of the steps explored in this paper when developing this type of curriculum.

### Institutional Mission in the Formal Curriculum

In the last fifteen years accrediting agencies in the United States have begun asking three questions that we should have been asking ourselves all along. These are: (1) "What are we trying to accomplish?", (2) "How are we accomplishing it?", and (3) "How do we know we have accomplished it? These questions lead to institutional activities that will include (1) re-examining the mission statement, (2) re-considering the curriculum, including its implementation, and (3) assessing institutional effectiveness

While most colleges and universities have mission statements describing goals and purposes, reading the mission statement does not usually tell parents or students what to expect. Mission statements must develop into institutional goals and specific objectives. Objectives, in turn, should be articulated into institutional activities.

Assuming that religious instruction and spiritual development are some of the primary objectives of religious institutions, it would follow that every Adventist college or university should identify where this objective is being met. Table 1 summarizes the institutional effectiveness model that begins with the mission and ends with outcomes and includes assessment that loops back to lead into reform.

**Table 1**  
**Institutional Effectiveness Model**

<i>Effectiveness Loop</i>		<i>Examples</i>
	Mission Statement and Institutional Goals	<i>".... preparing students for a life of service..."</i>
	Specific Objectives	<i>".... every student will experience and reflect on service... "</i>
	Institutional Activities	<i>- required class on volunteerism - community service day</i>
	Assessment of Outcomes	<i>-review of student and alumni service</i>

Although it can be argued that everything the institution does is part of the curriculum (Korniejczuk, 1998), with the notable exception of a few required religion courses, carrying out the “Adventist Education” mission has been left to the hidden curriculum (i.e. role models, institutional ethos), the informal curriculum (i.e. chapels, spiritual emphasis weeks, student missions) and to the efforts of faculty members who in various ways and with varying success express their personal faith in individual classes.

However, ultimately, what a university or college is “really about” can be seen most clearly in the formal curriculum through requirements made of all students, in the details of its various programs of study and in the manner in which the faculty deliver them. Unfortunately, for the most part, Adventist colleges and universities have missed the opportunity to develop unique, integrated programs of study designed to maximize the religious training and nurture of students.

It does not have to be so. Christian institutions have articulated their religious purposes through the formal curriculum in a variety of ways. While there are almost as many ways of accomplishing a Christian institution’s mission of religious instruction and nurture as there are institutions, these fall into five general models.

### **Models of Curricular Design for Religious Instruction and Nurture**

1. Required Religion Courses: Most Christian institutions (and certainly Adventist ones) require that a set of courses in religion be taken concurrently with the major. In the United States, these courses constitute part of the general education requirement. The number and nature of the courses varies across institutions with as many as one every quarter or semester of enrollment to one per year and from basic Bible study to History of Religion and Religious and Professional Ethics. Some colleges clearly require certain courses (i.e. Bible Doctrines) while others leave a great deal of choice to students.
2. Religion as a formal program of study for all students: A few Christian institutions require their students to complete a formal course of studies leading to a minor, another major or even a separate degree. For example, the doctorates in Psychology

at Biola University and Fuller Theological Seminary require a concurrent masters in Religion.

3. Integrated Majors: A few institutions have attempted coordinated programs in which religion is integrated within the major. While small, one of the best known and documented is the Integrated Studies degree in the Paracollege at St. Olaf College.
4. Capstone Experiences: Some institutions, primarily small colleges, require that students complete a capstone course or experience in their Senior year integrating their discipline and their faith. La Sierra University has done this for more than twenty years.
5. Integrated General Education: A small number of institutions have used the general education curriculum required of all students to integrate religion throughout the four years of the academic experience. While these programs vary in the format and delivery of the curriculum, they all attempt to provide a coordinated program that incorporates religion into other disciplines of the curriculum rather than leaving it as independent religion courses.

### **General Education: the Great Opportunity for Curricular Integration**

In recent years educators have argued for a redefinition of the purpose of general education. They have questioned the current distribution practices which leave a great deal of choice to students within some general areas (Miller, 1988). A report issued by the American Colleges Committee's Project in "Redefining the Meaning and Purpose of Baccalaureate Degrees" calls for a coherent structure and is summed up as follows:

"Our message to administrators and professors alike is that the curriculum requires structure, a framework sturdier than simply a major and general distribution requirements and more reliable than student interest... *We do not* believe that the road to a coherent undergraduate education can be constructed from a set of required subjects or academic disciplines". (p. 18)

A number of institutions have responded to this 1985 challenge by reducing the number of choices students have. Many of them have developed a coherent curriculum

with a central topic around which courses and activities congregate. For example, the Hartford University program seeks to place learning in a contextual frame that unites knowledge and human experience. Bradford College seeks to link liberal and professional education with the world of work. At Alaska Pacific University, the general education core is structured around four basic of life's environments: natural environment, social environment, individual environment, and spiritual environment. For St. Joseph's College the ultimate goal is a personal synthesis of what it means to be a human and a Christian in this world (Klein, 1990).

Our Adventist perspective provides many themes around which the courses and activities can congregate. Beth Casey (1994) notes this when she comments that "often, a particular religious affiliation in a liberal arts college will suggest fruitful ways of building toward an ethically focused, socially responsible liberal education" (p. 59). The closer the unifying theme is tied to the mission, the easier it is to recruit faculty to teach in the program, the more possible a satisfactory and supportive program assessment becomes and the easier it is to explain it to trustees, parents and students.

Several Adventist unifying themes come to mind, such as, "Created in the Image of God", "In His footsteps", "Human and Christian in His World", "Being Human: the Living Temple of God". As Adventist institutions we have a unique purpose to fulfill. A thoughtful, integrated, purposeful general education curriculum provides us the means to do so.

### **Development of an Integrated Curriculum: Considerations and Procedures**

In most universities the process of curricular design is fraught with problems. These range from faculty members arguing that if students are not expected to take a class in their discipline they cannot possibly be educated individuals, to turf battles between departments or schools stemming from fears of cuts. The process can flounder at any time or it can make what started as an outstanding and innovative program little less than a collection of compromises.

In order to avoid the pitfalls, two questions must be asked continuously. First, What do we want our students to learn, do, embrace or experience? or What do we want

them to “look like” at the end? And second, How do students learn best?, What type of delivery system will enhance their learning?, or How should we teach?

Table 2 summarizes the steps of curricular reform. Although a careful review of the complete process would be valuable, the scope of this paper does not allow it therefore, only the first few steps will be discussed.

**Table 2**  
**Steps and Factors of Curriculum Reform**

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Activities and leading questions</b>	<b>Factors to be considered</b>
1	Development of program objectives. “What do we want students to know?”	Mission statement
2	Environmental scan.	
	2a. How do students learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational between knowledge and experience.</li> <li>• Multiple perspectives.</li> <li>• Collaborative learning.</li> </ul>
	2b. What are the available and required institutional resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty expertise and/or resistance.</li> <li>• Equipment and facilities.</li> <li>• Campus climate and internal politics</li> <li>• Cost.</li> </ul>
3	Design of curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty generated.</li> <li>• Input from administration and trustees.</li> </ul>
	3a. What type of delivery system will best accomplish the objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty approval of concept.</li> </ul>
	3b. What resources are available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty expertise and availability.</li> </ul>
	3c. What specific courses and activities will accomplish the objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications to current curriculum.</li> </ul>
4	Implementation What is it going to take to get it going?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty recruitment and support.</li> <li>• Constituency education (parents, students, alumni).</li> <li>• Student support.</li> </ul>
5	Assessment How do we know we did what we said we would do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture of evidence.</li> <li>• Assessment plan in practice.</li> </ul>
6	Revisions How can the curriculum be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing the loop.</li> </ul>

The first question requires that we develop a clear set of objectives. These objectives must flow from the mission statement. While each institution must establish these on its own, starting with the mission statement, I submit that some overarching Adventist religious nurture assumptions are common to all institutions. These are<sup>1</sup>:

1. A wholistic approach to all life, based on the Adventist conviction of a single integrated truth, leads to “the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers” (White, 1903, p. 13).
2. Religion is a pervasive influence throughout the various subject matters rather than a discrete educational component.

“The religion of the Bible is not to be confined between the covers of a book, nor within the walls of a church. ... Bible religion is not one influence among many others; its influence is to be supreme, pervading and controlling every other. It is not to be like a dash of color brushed here and there upon the canvas, but it is to pervade the whole life, as if the canvas were dipped into the color, until every thread of the fabric were dyed a deep, unfading hue” (White, 1898, pp 307; 312).

3. A college or university should optimize the likelihood that students will develop a Christian worldview that will become the fabric of their existence (Sire, 1990).

From these assumptions and others developed by the institution, clear objectives for religious instruction and nurture need to be developed (See Appendix A for a sample from an Adventist University).

The second question, “How do students learn?” is crucial and should inform the way in which we teach. Only recently have we seen a change in focus from faculty teaching to student learning.<sup>2</sup> Though much can be said on this topic, a few points relevant to the development of a general education curriculum are especially relevant to curricular development.

Early work by Dewey and Piaget and more recent work by Perry point to the importance of (1) reciprocal relationships between knowledge (cognition) and

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<sup>1</sup> These concepts have been heavily influenced by the work of the faculty in the School of Religion at La Sierra University.

<sup>2</sup> Reflective of this movement was the 1998 meetings of the American Association of Higher Education centered around the theme of student learning.



experience (application) and (2) the significance of multiple perspectives for cognitive growth and maturity. In addition to these two, the value of collaborative learning is gaining attention in higher education.

Once these two questions have been carefully answered we are ready to begin thinking about what to teach and how to do it. That is, we will begin curriculum design.

General education reform on campuses is usually a very long and laborious process in which faculty spend countless hours trying to decide what students should know (see account by Guy and Schoepflin, 1996). Unfortunately, more often than not, innovative programs focusing on the institutional mission fall to the pressures of conservatism and campus turf battles. It is therefore of utmost importance that in the third step, the actual development of the curriculum, we continuously keep in mind the objectives as well as the way in which students learn.

#### **Integration Goals: Integrated Programs**

Traditional curricular design and delivery systems of general education do not easily lend themselves to integration objectives. Scholars have recognized the problem of disciplinary divisions. Rather than providing a sampling of what the disciplines do, general education should expect the disciplines to lead our students in deeply reflective study of the central issues of our existence.

Institutions of higher education are recognizing this reality. Jerry Gaff (1988) in a presentation to the Asherville Institute on General Education listed sixteen characteristics of the current "curriculum reform movement". Central among these was a tighter curriculum structure (away from distribution requirements), and the integration of knowledge and moral reflection where "institutions are reemphasizing values through the studies of professional ethics, social problems, and the implications of new developments in science and technology" (p. 4). Charles White (1994) reporting on comprehensive reform at Portland State University, a leader in general education reform, states "we finally concluded that we could not state with conviction that the current distribution requirements are meaningful... we found that our current approach does little to engage students actively in their educations" (p. 169).

We must also conclude that while a distributive model of general education in which individual faculty teach discrete courses along disciplinary lines and students have a great deal of choice may be satisfying to faculty and students, it is not the best model to achieve curricular integration of faith and learning. What some have called “cafeteria style” curriculum leaves students on their own to find connections, evaluate disparities and develop a worldview. Our purposes are too important to be left to chance connections made by students and while they will necessarily differ from secular institutions, the methodologies to accomplish them in the formal curriculum are the same. In order to maximize student integration, a coherent, integrated curriculum, one that crosses disciplinary lines, should be developed.

Why should we consider such a radical departure from traditional instruction? If we shift from presenting students an overview, a sprinkling if you please, of the academic disciplines to a purposeful curriculum centered in deep reflection of the human condition and our relationship to God and each other, a new methodology will be needed. Furthermore, if we consider that students fundamentally learn by making connections, we will need to develop a curriculum that (1) is focused around a theme, (2) engages students in considering their relationship to God and each other and (3) uses the disciplines as methodologies and samples of information in the pursuit of answers. Such a curriculum must by its very definition be interdisciplinary and is best delivered through team teaching.

### **Interdisciplinary Programs and Team Teaching: a Model for Integration**

Although interdisciplinarity and team teaching often occur conjointly (interdisciplinary courses are often team taught and team-teaching commonly provides an interdisciplinary perspective), the two are not the same and deserve individual attention. Let us expand the definitions and considerations of each.

Why should the curriculum be interdisciplinary?

The dictionary defines “interdisciplinary” as “combining or involving two or more academic disciplines or fields of study.” Why should we choose to combine two or more disciplines in our attempt to reach integration of faith and learning in the formal curriculum? The following is a partial list of reasons:

1. If we accept that there is a single integrated truth and that the disciplines are discrete subjects with their own focus of study and lens (methodology), the view from more than one discipline using different lenses will better approximate truth.
2. If we are preparing students to encounter life issues, we must confront these issues with them. Disciplinary specialization tends to ignore or downplay broader issues and holistic perspectives. James Davis (1995) notes: “at their worst, the disciplines can be reductionistic, seeing the whole world through their own lens; more likely, they simply ignore the phenomena that exist outside their purview, leaving them to other specialists” (p. 37).
3. An interdisciplinary curriculum will destabilize methodology and place it in its true position, as a tool rather than an end in itself.
4. In the specific case of religious education, an interdisciplinary approach will take religion “out of the box” of religion classes and into the real world of the student’s interest. It will provide the opportunity for religious application to contemporary issues.
5. When at least two disciplines examine the subject matter, learning will be enhanced by the comparison and contrast.
6. Conflict arising from disparate perspectives can enhance critical thinking and induce the disequilibrium necessary to foster cognitive development (Hursh, Hass and More, 1983).

Why should it be team-taught?

While an interdisciplinary goal does not require that courses be taught by at least two faculty, team-taught classes<sup>3</sup> significantly contribute to the integration we expect our students to achieve. The nature of a team-taught class provides significant advantages to students and faculty. Here are a few:

1. The interdisciplinary nature of the course (two bodies of knowledge and two methodologies) becomes salient when these points are made by two different faculty members.
2. The professional respect that the teachers give each other is a powerful model of decentrism for students and a model for how professionals treat each other in the real world.
3. The honesty of discussion between faculty members who may disagree demythologises them and their disciplines in the eyes of students.
4. Team taught courses are a safeguard against delusions of mastery in faculty, or as Parker Palmer (1993) has put it,

"when faculty are required to teach in fields outside their own, as in the undergraduate 'common course',... , they can no longer lecture *ex cathedra*. Now they must listen carefully to a subject whose voice they are hearing for the first time, and to students who may have more insight into the subject than they themselves. Under these conditions, teachers are compelled to learn consensual methods of teaching and learning, of seeking and being sought by truth. Under these conditions, the spiritual virtues are not only encouraged but required for survival" (p. 114 and 115).

5. Team taught courses require faculty to engage with other faculty in reflection on teaching and integration of faith and learning.

While the arguments in favor of interdisciplinary team-teaching are strong, this type of curriculum is not without its problems. Among these are faculty resistance to team-teaching and the pedagogical difficulties associated with this type of teaching as well as students complaints about the reduction in freedom and the perceived increased

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper "team taught" is defined as a course taught by at least two faculty members who plan and deliver the course together.

difficulty in the classes. For a careful review of all the issues read *Interdisciplinary Courses and Team Teaching* by James Davis.

### **Curricular Reform as a Means to Integrate Faith and Learning: Conclusions**

Because of time and space this paper has focused on what I consider the fundamental aspects of integrating religious training and nurture into the formal curriculum. We must clearly keep in mind that (1) religious instruction and nurture is only one of the many goals that the curriculum, including general education, must accomplish and (2) this paper has only addressed a portion of the process (see Table 2). Critical steps have not been developed and the nature of the product has not been presented. Appendix B includes a sample core curriculum, the one developed at La Sierra University.

General education reform is often a difficult process. There are many steps and the process can falter at any one of these. But the outcome is worth the effort because it provides Adventist colleges and universities the mechanisms to build our mission into the very fabric of an academic institution, its program of studies. It allows us to make spirituality the “thread that ought to weave a pattern of meaning into the total learning experience” (McGrath, 1974, p. 2), the place where we most clearly articulate what “we stand for” in the contemporary world of higher education.

Is it worth it? I believe so and so do others. In 1995, when La Sierra University trustees voted the current general education multidisciplinary, team-taught program the comments from two of them made worth the effort. They said: “If there had been this kind of program a few years ago, my children might have gone to an Adventist college” and “Now I can tell people what this University is really about”.

Note: I am deeply indebted to the General Education Committee and the School of Religion at La Sierra University for developing some of the key concepts used in this paper as they have struggled with these issues in the process of curriculum reform.

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## Appendix A

## The Role of Religion in the Curriculum

## I

A. The University's Mission. As a community of learning and faith, La Sierra University seeks to instill in its students an inclusive, integrated vision of reality that translates into moral principles, ethical living, and devoted service to fellow humans.

B. University and Church. La Sierra University participates fully in the symbiosis of church and academe by combining in a single institution the activities normally associated with higher education and the commitments characteristic of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The ingredients of this combination consist of people - students, teachers and others - with religious convictions, a perspective on education identified as wholistic and comprehensive, and an educational product characterized by mission and service.

This combination of university activities and church concerns accounts not only for the general commitment to service but extends to other matters as well. For example, the university offers the church a unique window upon the world. Through this window the church may view the world with eyes trained to quantify, analyze and synthesize, as it moves out into the world with the gospel and works of love.

Moreover, the university offers the church a leading arena in which to do its thinking. In this setting, the church does not control thinking by means of creeds or dogmas, no does the university attempt to think in defiance of or in opposition to church convictions. Rather the two are integrated in such a way that Christian faith submits itself to thinking, and the truth opens itself up to the perspective of religious belief. Here lies the goal of the Christian university: comprehensive, wholistic, values-oriented.

In striving toward that goal, the university provides an environment that fosters learning, growth in knowledge, spiritual maturation. As a total environment, the university context makes both curricular and co-curricular provision for such development.

C. The faculty. All teachers at La Sierra University are expected to express the religious values and spiritual principles of the university through their respective courses and personal interaction with students. In addition, special responsibility for providing direct religious instruction falls upon the faculty of the School of Religion. That responsibility is serious and complex, calling for constant attention to the following: (1) close formal collaboration between the religion faculty and their colleagues in other schools of the university; (2) integration of the religion faculty in the delivery of general education courses, in ways that make clear to the student the potential for a faith that takes full cognizance of issues and perspectives of other disciplines; (3) religion faculty who, along with their commitment to the general education tasks are also qualified for and committed to the more specialized teaching within the religious disciplines; (4) ongoing faculty development programs designed to acquaint religion and other faculty members with the relationships between religion and other fields, and to enhance their abilities in team-teaching integrative courses; (5) the expected contribution of the religion faculty to the religious profile of the university and to spiritual leadership in its educational work.

D. The curricular provisions. Undergraduate religion courses in the university maintain a distinction between those which offer the specialized knowledge specific to the religious studies major, the pre-ministerial preparation, and the general education offerings for all students. While this reflects the seriousness with which the academic discipline of religious studies is engaged on this campus, all religion courses, including those in the general education curriculum, must retain educational and academic integrity. Accordingly, students must be led in those courses as to the generally accepted Adventist understandings of religion - its presuppositions, methods, conclusions, and applications. Care is taken to insure that religion course content and perspectives will not be dominated by private or idiosyncratic presuppositions or methods of study. All religion courses are to be theologically sound, as determined by the respective branches of religious studies, and by the unique perspectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## II. The Place of Religion in General Education

The participation of the religion faculty in the general education curriculum is especially crucial in that these courses touch many more students than those who are majoring in religious studies; such courses contribute more broadly to the religious aspects of the university's mission, they bring together religion and other faculty in collaborative curriculum planning, course development, team teaching, student advisement, and common educational concerns. The religion component in the general education program contributes a defining aspect of the general personality of this university, identifying it as a Christian, Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning.

Religious objectives include the following:

- (A) A perspective which expresses the wholistic, inclusive vision that underlies Seventh-day Adventist thought about all of reality.
- (B) An integrative approach to the relationship between religion and other fields of knowledge.
- (C) A placement of Adventist teachings and principles within the context of the Christian faith, and as a participant in the larger world of religion in general.
- (D) Exposure of students to religion as an academic discipline.
- (E) An address to questions arising from the student's chosen profession or career goals, thereby assisting each student in making a religious contribution to church, community, and society at large.
- (F) Attractive presentation of the unique Seventh-day Adventist understandings of life and faith. This means not indoctrination, but exploration of the tenets of Adventist thought in the context of the Christian believer's engagement with the ultimate issues of faith. Far from mere indoctrination, such study involves serious reflection upon and participation in the quest for fuller insights into truth, and upon the Seventh-day Adventist contributions.
- (G) A grasp of the processes of revelation and inspiration through which the sacred writings of the Judaic and Christian faiths have been produced, together with an understanding



of the responsible approaches to scriptural interpretation which this implies. Through direct experience in analytical reading of scriptural material, the La Sierra student is to be enabled to make enlightened, responsible application of scriptural authority in daily life.

(H) A sense of one's ethical responsibilities toward other individuals and society at large.

(I) As part of the total La Sierra University experience, a maturation in the inner spiritual life, as the wellspring from which moral values are developed and lived out.

### III. The New General Education Curriculum at La Sierra University

La Sierra University's new General Education curriculum is designed to participate in the University's overall educational thrust toward the Seventh-day Adventist vision of the place and role of religious values in life.

(A) As a vision of wholeness, the Adventist perspective undergirds the entire curriculum, but is especially set forth in the course GND 104, "The Idea of Being Human," where the human condition is presented, across three cultural contexts, as universally conceived to be a religious matter. In GNED 305 the religious paradigm as a wholistic understanding of all reality is directly juxtaposed over against the naturalistic assumptions of scientific models.

(B) As a vision of integrative truth, the Adventist perspective is expressed in the cross-disciplinary make-up of the teaching teams in the core. Such concerns are given explicit attention especially in the capstone course GNED 404 which enable seniors to explore the religious, moral, and social implications of their respective disciplines.

(C) As participating in the larger religio-cultural world in which people live and interact today, the Seventh-day Adventist vision, always oriented toward world-wide service and mission, is increasingly cognizant of its character as a religion among religions. The core curriculum leads the student through three successively focused steps:

1. The larger context of religious experience and values as common to all people informs the considerations of courses GNED 104, 105 and 205.

2. The Christian faith and experience are set forth in GNED 205 as the perspective from which other faiths are viewed.

3. The uniquely Seventh-day Adventist faith and experience comprise the entire content of GNED 304.

(D) Religion as the subject of disciplined, academic investigation and reflection is demonstrated throughout the offerings of both the core and breadth offerings of the curriculum.

(E) The course GNED 404 is designed to provide La Sierra students with foundations from which to address the moral and ethical issues posed in the practice of their respective professions.

(F) The Seventh-day Adventist understandings of truth are reviewed as part of the Advent Movement's continuing development in GNED 304 and are explored more extensively in the breadth course RELT 245, "Christian Beliefs."

(G) Issues of scriptural interpretation emerge at two points in the core:

1. In GNED 205 other scriptural traditions appear alongside Christianity in considering the foundations of religious authority. Distinctions between Christian and other understandings of scriptural authority are dealt with here.

2. In GNED 304 the biblical foundations of Adventist belief are considered. This provides a context for briefly sketching out the development of hermeneutics in the Adventist tradition.

In the breadth offering RELB 104, "Jesus and the Gospels," issues of interpretation are more explicitly set forth, as well as modeled in the approaches applied to study of the gospels.

(H) Ethical considerations emerge primarily in GNED 105, where the individual's relation to social context is explored, and in GNED 404, where moral and social issues are considered in the context of the student's field of knowledge and practice.

(I) Several of the above-mentioned objectives also have legitimate claim on the larger campus culture, where worship, the devotional life, ethical responsibility and community service reinforce the religious values treated in the curriculum. Such is especially the case with spiritual formation, whose primary setting is rightly in the cocurricular context.

Certain controls remain inherent in La Sierra University's process of delivering these courses. The first of these is simply in the character of the faculty itself. Members of the University faculty, throughout all disciplines, are chosen with specific reference to their commitment to upholding and modeling the values which the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the University represent. The second factor is the standing General Education Committee (made up of representatives from all the university's schools, including the School of Religion), which acts as a screening, guidance and advisory body to faculty teams responsible for developing all the courses, and provides oversight and assessment of what is taught in all core courses.

The Faculty of the School of Religion  
La Sierra University  
November, 1995

## Appendix B

## The Core Curriculum

La Sierra University (Approved Fall 1995, implemented Fall 1996)

The Core curriculum is required of all students. This curriculum is complimented by required competencies in English, mathematics, a modern language and physical fitness. In addition, additional classes are required (with some choice) from the Humanities, Social Sciences, Religion, Natural Sciences and Fine Arts.

Besides being an object of study in GNED 105, oral communication is a teaching and learning tool in all courses in the core curriculum.

## GNED 101 Orientation Seminar (1)

Required of all entering freshmen and transfer students, this course provides an introduction to La Sierra University life, including the history and ethos of the University, the general education curriculum, information technology and other learning resources. The course also addresses characteristic modes of thinking and understanding in the various areas of academic study, and develops effective learning strategies and skills.

## GNED 104 The Idea of Being Human in Three Cultures (4)

Using three cultural examples (e.g., African, Chinese, European), this course compares and contrasts the changing ways in which peoples have conceived of human nature. The human relationship to animals, the life cycle from birth to death, and the issues of sex and gender give specific focus to the course's comparative approach. Additionally, the course pays special attention to the influence of religion, natural philosophy, and modern science on the formation of these cultural understandings.

*Resource-based learning.* This course also introduces students to the goals and techniques of information literacy- to identify what information is needed, to locate that information, to evaluate it, to synthesize it, and to apply it.

## GNED 105 Individuals and Their Societies (4)

This course deals with relationships among individuals, social groups, and institutions. Special emphasis is given to the ways in which power and authority are used in these relationships and to the role of oral communication and networking as tools for constructing social ties and mediating disputes. The major social groups to be explored are the state, the workplace, the school, and the family. The primary social traditions to be explored are politics, economics, education, religion, and science.

*Resource-based learning.* This course also expands the students' proficiency in the skills of information literacy- to identify what information is needed, to locate that information, to evaluate it, to synthesize it, and to apply it.

#### GNET 204 The American Experience in a Global Community (4)

This course begins with the belief that the United States does not have a single cultural heritage. Rather, it has always been a culturally plural society, united by the dominant cultural values of politics (republicanism) and economics (capitalism). This cultural pluralism is primarily the result of the peopling of America by immigration and the regional sectionalism that characterizes the vase country. Four main sources of American culture demand special attention: Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe. The following vehicles for the transmission of American cultures will receive greatest attention: architecture, art, cinema, dance, literature, music, and ritual. This course also exercises the students' proficiency in the skills of information literacy.

#### GNET 205 The Experience of Religion in Three Cultures (4)

This course begins with a philosophical and psychological exploration of the human phenomena of religious belief and experience. It then proceeds to examine the theologies and institutions that have been created to formalize doctrine, establish community, and insure that preservation and perpetuation. Special attention is given to Christianity and to two of the following: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Animism. Finally, it activates an interaction with the contemporary world by exploring how to develop relevant, persuasive individual and community value systems and how these systems direct individual and community choices and judgments. This course also exercises the students' proficiency in the skills of information literacy.

#### GNET 304 Adventism in Global Perspective (4)

This course takes a broad interdisciplinary look at Adventism from its inception in nineteenth-century New England to its present situation as a multicultural community of faith, examining the major figures and significant turning points in the history of the movement. Students will trace the development of Adventist beliefs and their relationship to those of other Christian denominations. The course will also consider various aspects of the Adventist lifestyle, and will survey the principal activities of Adventism-health care, education, media, missions, etc. - as well as Adventist spirituality and the problems it encounters in predominantly secular environment. This course also exercises the students' proficiency in the skills of information literacy.

#### GNET 305 Scientific Rationality and Cultural Relativism (4)

This course explores the nature of scientific knowledge and scientific method, examines the historical development of science in the western world and its affect on non-western cultures, and evaluates the current issues that dominate scientific activity. A major goal is to lead both science and non-science students to understand both the limitations and usefulness of science for their lives. This course also exercises the students' proficiency in the skills of information literacy.

#### GNET 404 Moral and Social Aspects of the Academic Discipline (4)

A senior-level seminar required as a capstone to the general education program and to each student's major program of studies, this course considers epistemological, moral, and social issues raised by the student's discipline. Students explore significant issues both abstractly and

as specific problems of contemporary life, bringing all their experience and knowledge to bear on a consideration of the way in which their values interacts with their discipline. This course also exercises the students' proficiency in the skills of information literacy.