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**Holistic Student Development in a University Residence Hall:
Adventist Philosophy and Goals**

by

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1 Introduction

Typically, when students enter our residence halls, they live in dormitory buildings together with other students. They find well-developed educational programs, helpful resources and encounter people running the residence halls in a specific way. They are confronted with certain rules, regulations and guidelines. But where do these guidelines come from, why do we have them and what do we want to achieve by them?

In order to arrive at a meaningful and helpful educational encounter with students, we need to invest in an extensive thought process. (1) First, we start out with our basic assumptions about God, the supernatural, the world and nature. On the basis of these assumptions (2) we develop our Christian world view. Due to our Christian world view (3) we generate a Christian philosophy of education which is (4) the foundation of our educational goals and objectives. After clarifying educational goals and objectives (5) we apply them to the educational process in the residence hall setting. This results in (6) developing certain contracts, guidelines, rules and regulations. The kind of facilities, the availability of resources, the qualifications of staff and the content of programs are the result of this entire thought process.

In a Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education we usually state our educational goals in specific ways such as: Adventist education is Christ-centered and aims to restore human beings to the image of God. This is basic to our philosophy and our educational task. Much has been written on our basic assumptions about God and the supernatural and our Christian world view. Therefore, I will begin with a few basic considerations about our Christian philosophy of education and discuss our educational goals in detail (4). In this way I will break down the general educational goals into specific objectives. This may help us to get a clearer picture of what we are aiming for when educating our students. The application of these goals to the educational process in a residence hall setting is the subject of another paper.

2 The Philosophy Behind the Goals of the Educational Process

God meets people in His Son Jesus Christ as the Creator, Partner, Companion, and loving Father. This love culminates in salvation and results in growth and development. Thus, Adventist educational philosophy and goals, based on the biblical view of God and man, are the foundation of student development on the campus of Friedensau Adventist University.

2.1 To Restore the Image of God

According to the story of creation, God made human beings as man and woman in His likeness (Gen. 1:27). This likeness (James 3:9) has to do with people in their physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social being. It also has to do with the requirement to deal with this God-given life in a loving and responsible way (Eph. 5:1-20) and to preserve and care for nature responsibly (Gen. 1:28; 2:15).

Although the likeness of God was darkened by the fall (Gen. 3) and people tend towards evil (Rom. 7:17-25), they **still have a constant desire to do good** (Rom. 8:18-23). In salvation and a new birth this desire is taken up and thus human beings are led back to the likeness of God (Eph. 4:24). Because Jesus Christ is the Savior and perfect likeness (Col. 1:15-20), being created in the image of God means both a gift and a responsibility.

2.2 To Teach Values, Attitudes, and Behavior

Teaching values, attitudes, and behavior should be given special emphasis. The basic Christian values can be summarized by the terms **trust, love, and hope** (1 Cor. 13:13). These values are supported by the following attitudes and behavior:

- listening to God's voice
- a positive attitude towards life and development
- self-acceptance and treating others lovingly
- keeping the "Golden Rule"
- solidarity with the weak
- honesty in all areas
- responsibility in planning and administration
- willingness to serve and make sacrifices
- healthful living
- a responsible attitude towards nature and the environment.

2.3 Character Building

The educational goal is to make students aware of their *own value* and lead them towards *responsible and independent thinking and action, self-responsibility and self-control*, as well as the *ability to deal with freedom responsibly and create social contacts*. This process leads to the development of a meaningful philosophy for their lives.

3 Specific Educational Objectives

The detailed objectives are based on the holistic view of humanity and are defined along the main goals of the character-building process. They cover as many areas of life as possible. Although they are inter-dependent and intersecting, they have been treated separately for systematic reasons. Our Christian world view and our deepest Christian convictions are basic to all educational goals described.

This paper attempts to name the many underlying detailed goals of a holistic educational process. There are so many seemingly small details we are unconsciously involved in in our school life without identifying them as part of the educational process – but to get the whole picture we need to spell them out. This will be done in the next section.

3.1 Physical Development

3.1.1 Various Sports to Compensate for a General Lack of Exercise in an Academically-oriented Life

While exercising the mind, the body is often neglected—but our mind does function better when our body is in good shape. Therefore, we need to provide good facilities for students to get exercise. In addition, if students exercise together with other students, staff and faculty members, social and emotional needs are met. However, in order to support the underlying educational process of Adventist education, we believe that it is good for university students to organize and carry out sporting events themselves, to name one example. This has holistic implications for developing social and leadership skills.

3.1.2 Physical Activity as a Necessary Counterpart to Mental Work

Many students need to finance their fees. One way to do so is to work in the maintenance

department. While necessarily working for their school fees, they come in contact with the physical areas of work life. In addition students may have their own vegetable garden and grow fruits and vegetables. All this will contribute to a balanced life-style on campus.

3.1.3 Developing Physical Awareness and Hygiene

One aspect of a good physical development is to become aware of one's body, appearance, and personal hygiene. In addition, the whole question of temperance and healthy nutrition is important here. Some might deem it unnecessary to mention this aspect. But I believe, for example, that the way we build our residence halls and maintain our facilities will have an impact on developing healthy physical awareness and hygiene among students. Therefore cleanliness and a tidy appearance are encouraged even by the way we maintain our facilities. Sufficient sanitary units are available and kept clean. Even a sauna may be added to our residence halls in order to support physical awareness and get some relaxation. This carries the message that our body is as important as our mind.

3.1.4 An Ordered Life, Cleanliness and Physical Well-being Contribute to Good Health

Regulations, contracts, and carefully and wisely enforced rules will ensure that student life in somewhat crowded living quarters remains orderly. A combination of sufficient exercise, work and study, creativity and a positive attitude foster physical well-being. The cafeteria offers a healthy, balanced, vegetarian diet. Special offers such as brunch, international food weeks and other offers create a positive atmosphere among the students.

Grounds and buildings are cleaned mainly by students. In this way we help them to assume more responsibility for cleanliness and the orderly appearance of the buildings they use. Even the way we deal with our garbage will contribute to a responsible use of environmental resources. Students, lecturers, and employees are encouraged to separate the garbage so that some of it may be recycled.

In the above section I treated very different aspects of campus life. But in this way we may realize how every aspect of student life can help to reach educational goals. There is nothing in the encounter with students which does not contribute positively or destructively to the educational process.

3.1.5 Arts and Crafts to Develop Creativity and Provide Social Contact

We want students to develop their creativity in all aspects of life. At the same time they come in contact with each other and with themselves. While working creatively with their hands and their minds in arts and crafts the participants come in contact with deeper levels of their personalities, character and emotions. Sometimes we can observe an inner healing process, sometimes a kind of counseling takes place, but in any case there is the feeling of satisfaction and joy. Students come closer to the goal of enhancing self-awareness.

3.1.6 Enhancing Awareness of Appropriate Sexual Conduct

Adventist education aims to encourage students to live according to a high biblical standard of appropriate sexual conduct. This includes the area of pre-marital sex, pornography, watching appropriate films, dealing with all the underlying and obvious temptations of the internet, media and the surrounding world. Our goal is to help students to become aware of cultural and personal pitfalls and to deal with them appropriately and responsibly.

3.2 Emotional Development

3.2.1 To Recognize and Accept One's own, Gender-specific Emotionality

There are many similarities between male and female. However, there is much evidence that each gender has its own make-up. To recognize and to accept one's own, gender-specific emotionality is crucial in the process of finding inner peace and of becoming reconciled with one-self and with others. Sometimes students find it hard to accept their own gender because they were rejected in this regard by their own parents, family or culture. The goal is to lead them into a reconciliation process. The development of equal rights on campus is much needed.

3.2.2 Developing Self-respect, Self-acceptance, and Self-worth

Self-respect will develop by respecting the rights and limits of others. Self-acceptance will develop first by loving and accepting one-self and others. The experience of being loved and being able to love others will result in enhanced self-worth. This is basic to a healthy emotional development. Many students come to the university emotionally hurt and in need. Creating an empathetic, encouraging atmosphere on campus, in residence halls, in

classrooms, and in the encounter with the administration, supports the healing process. Each individual, regardless of nationality, race, or religion, is valued and encouraged. One of the aims is to show appreciation for one another.

3.2.3 Self-development by Encountering One-Self and Others

Campus life offers almost endless possibilities to encounter one-self and others. We want students to get to know themselves, to get to know their personality, their abilities and their limits. Gift and personality tests may provide one way to encounter one-self. By encountering others in personal contact, in social events, in spiritual endeavors, in sports, in creative activities, students will develop a good deal of self-awareness. Living together with students of different nationalities and cultures will help them not only to become aware of other cultures but of their own culture as well. Rules and regulations and outside control are purposely limited to leave room for self-development.

3.2.4 Learning to Deal with Everyday and Conflict Situations

Students are encouraged to take on responsibility in solving their own conflicts. Counseling is offered if necessary. In order to learn to deal with everyday and conflict situations constructively, students need to have occasion to do so. Therefore they are encouraged to organize and lead out in recreational activities, worships, student council, chapel periods, sports etc. There need to be possibilities for growth by participating in and leading out in meetings, by working as resident assistants and in other academic and non-academic areas.

3.2.5 Enhancing Awareness of One's own Personality

To enhance awareness of one's own personality students need multiple feed-back experiences. They will get some in the classroom, but campus life has even greater potential for providing non-academic feed-back if one is open to accept it. For helpful feed-back experiences we need to develop an open, honest, authentic atmosphere on campus.

3.2.6 Developing Emotional Balance

Emotionally unbalanced students find it difficult to study and to relate to themselves and to others. Developing emotional balance will help students to find satisfaction, meaning and purpose in their lives. It helps to resolve emotional and relational conflicts. If students can

develop an identity as beloved children of God and children of the King and get in touch with their Creator, they have taken a major step toward emotional balance. It is also important that students find a balance between time alone and in communion with others.

3.2.7 Developing Imagination and Creativity

One of the goals of emotional development is to foster the imagination and creativity of our students. This is one of God's gifts to his children. The university, the residence hall, the church need not only provide possibilities for reaching this goal but to actively appreciate students' contributions in arts, crafts, plays, writings, publications, and so on. There should be appropriate occasions to display and discuss works of students.

3.2.8 Fine Arts and Their Development

One of God's ways to help us grow holistically is the fine arts and their development. This refers to classical as well as modern music. We want students to build up all their fine art abilities. Whether performing before other people or just playing for fun, this will effect them emotionally, spiritually, mentally and socially in a positive manner. There should be numerous opportunities to grow in fine arts.

3.2.9 Helping to Have a Meaningful Encounter with Aesthetics

Different cultures develop very different approaches to aesthetics. By helping students to have a meaningful encounter with aesthetics we help them to develop an important part of the emotional aspect of humans. We encounter aesthetics not only in art and culture, but also in the way we decorate buildings, offices, the residence halls, classrooms and so on. Personal taste and aesthetic development could be encouraged by allowing students to decorate their rooms and apartments according to taste. Art exhibitions on and off campus and visits to historic/cultural sites may help to approach aesthetics as well. Providing meaningful encounters with aesthetics will help students to develop an understanding and feeling for aesthetics and may help them to refine their own taste.

3.2.10 Learning to Live with the Diversity of Cultures

An international campus provides many learning experiences for living with the diversity of cultures. Planning and organizing programs about their home country, modeling typical

clothing and offering typical food will help to identify with one's own culture and to open up to other cultures. Cross-cultural friendships can develop and be cultivated. Specific cultural differences should be discussed. Sometimes there is tension between native students and foreigners. Becoming aware of these tensions and dealing with them constructively is one of the goals in regard to the diversity of cultures. If foreign students face racial violence they need to be equipped to handle the situation by knowing how to react and whom to contact.

3.3 Mental Development

Mental development does not take place in the classroom alone. In daily life in general and campus life in specific there are many possibilities to enter the process of enhancing mental abilities.

3.3.1 Developing Integrative Comprehension

It is important for us that we become able to regard all sides of a situation and to see through the eyes of others. We want to help students to understand their own positions and perspectives but also the positions and perspectives of others--of fellow students, of the university, of the church, of the country and so on. For example, student participation in the decision-making process of the university will support the development of an integrative comprehension.

3.3.2 Enabling Independent Thinking

Students should not be confronted with a set dogmatic system but should be given "tools" to learn to develop their own values, convictions and life goals. Helping students to think independently will enable them to make wise decisions according to their real needs. It will help them to conduct themselves responsibly and to control themselves from within. We want them to be thinkers and not mere reflectors.

3.3.3 Enhancing General Knowledge for Daily Life

The educational process does not only take place in the classroom nor does it refer to educating specialists. We want students to acquire general knowledge for daily life tasks.

Working to earn their tuition, taking part in practical and voluntary work, is one way to extend their general knowledge, skills and abilities.

3.3.4 Developing Exemplary Learning

Our students will specialize in their major field of interest. Here they become experts with a somewhat comprehensive understanding. In most areas, however, they will not become experts, but they should be enabled to develop exemplary learning skills. They should learn to draw meaningful conclusions from a given example and apply principles to other areas. This skill can also be taught outside the classroom.

3.3.5 Accepting Leadership Responsibility

We want students to become responsible humans and responsible leaders. In order to facilitate this process, the university should provide areas where students not only accept but practice leadership responsibility as well. Leadership skills need to be developed. We want students to take part in society and therefore we will encourage them to accept various responsible roles in society.

3.4. Spiritual Development

3.4.1 Encouragement to Search for and Find God

Studying at a university very often means that students have to scrutinize their beliefs, to reconstruct their world view, to relate to their religious traditions in new ways, and to find new meaning in their relationship to God. Other students are confronted with spiritual matters for the first time. We want to sensitively encourage all students to enter the process of searching for God and making sense out of what they see, hear and experience. We want to assist them in “finding” God, in relating to their Creator, Savior and Source of meaning.

3.4.2 Experiencing the Existence and Character of God in Personal Encounters with Jesus Christ

Before students relate to God, they may first need to be enabled to believe in and to experience the existence of God. They are supported in developing their own understanding of the character of God, of his love to them, his friendliness and his redemptive ambitions for them. We should not assume that most of our students are in close contact with God.

Because he revealed himself through his son Jesus Christ, we will help students to have personal encounters with Jesus. In the personal encounter with Jesus, conversion, confession, repentance, and forgiveness are sensitively encouraged.

3.4.3 Developing Faith for Salvation and Help in Life Beyond the Here and Now

We want students to find a meaningful spirituality in their present lives. In addition, we will assist them in developing faith for salvation and help through their hope of a life beyond the here and now. We want them to realize that death is not the last word spoken in their lives and the lives of their loved ones and friends.

3.4.4 Living Life in Accordance with God's Word

When students realize and personally accept that their life lived in accordance with God's word is relevant, meaningful, helpful, uplifting, etc. for them, we have reached an important goal in the educational process of developing a Christian character. Employees, instructors, deans, and fellow students may serve as role models in this process.

3.4.5 Encouraging Individual and Joint Bible Study and Prayer

In order to support a meaningful encounter with the spiritual realm of reality we encourage individual and joint Bible study and prayer. God reveals himself to each human being in different ways. Individual and joint Bible study and prayer is one of God's ways of speaking to his creatures. However, in order to help students assume responsibility for their own spiritual development, they are encouraged to organize spiritual small group activities themselves in addition to what is offered on the university campus.

3.4.6 Experiencing Spiritual Communion

Human beings are social beings. This is also true for the spiritual dimension of life. Therefore, we provide possibilities to reach the goal of experiencing spiritual communion. Spiritual communion takes place in an atmosphere of freedom, appreciation, and authenticity.

3.4.7 Inviting Students to Mission and Intercession

As soon as students have established a meaningful relationship to God they are encouraged to direct their attention to their fellow human beings. This includes the invitation to mission and social outreach in general and for intercession in specific.

3.5 Social Development

3.5.1 Accepting Oneself as a Social Being

Community can be intensely experienced on a close-knit campus, where students do not live and study alone, but in a student community. In order to profit from this experience, students need to accept themselves as social beings. They do not live for themselves but are part of a constantly increasing social system (family, peers, church and school community, society, culture, humankind)

3.5.2 Social Skills Acquired through Self-worth

A sense of self-worth is basic to acquiring social skills. Therefore, we support whatever will help students gain a healthy sense of self-worth and try to avoid whatever weakens students in their healthy self-worth.

3.5.3 Respecting the Dignity and Uniqueness of Others

Every student is unique and has inherent dignity. The cultural diversity of students is fostered and treasured. Foreign students, for example, contribute to a fruitful encounter between the culture and language of the university and their own culture and language. Resettled students of German origin studying in Friedensau are encouraged to regard their roots positively. They are offered help in adjusting to the German culture and language. All this will contribute to reaching the goal of respecting the dignity and uniqueness of others.

3.5.4 Experiencing Diversity as an Enrichment

Every student in his or her uniqueness and dignity is also very different. Differences in personality, spirituality, emotionality, mentality and in culture are viewed as an enrichment.

We want students to experience and treasure diversity as valuable and enriching.

3.5.5 Cultivating Accepting, Supportive Speech

The tone in which students, faculty, and employees address each other is to be accepting, supportive, and up-building. Communication is encouraged by openness and willingness to listen. This will help students to cultivate accepting, supportive speech.

3.5.6 Learning Peace-making Through Tolerance, Conflict Solving and Willingness to Compromise

God is a God of peace who wants to enrich his creatures with this peace. One way to experience peace is to actively learn peace-making through tolerance of one's self and others, to learn to solve conflicts constructively, and to develop a willingness to compromise. We want to help students learn problem-solving strategies and respect for gender, religion, and skin color.

3.5.7 Finding A Balance Between Self-Assertion and Adaptability

We and our students especially are part of a competing society. Students need to learn to assert themselves. So many students are raised in such a way that they find it difficult to say "NO", or to state their opinion openly. On the other hand, other students are inclined to live out their individuality in a selfish way and this results in a lack of consideration for others. Therefore, what is needed is learning to balance between self-assertion and adaptability in order to relate to one another in a socially healthful manner. A task for foreign students is to practice adapting to the conditions of the country they are studying in without giving up their own identity.

3.5.8 Developing Self-Responsibility and Responsibility for Others

In the area of mental development we want students to think for themselves instead of being mere reflectors of the thoughts of others. This is true for social development as well. We want students to develop and accept self-responsibility. Students themselves are responsible for meeting their needs, for structuring their time within the framework of the university, and for solving their problems. They are responsible for asking for help and support. On the other hand, as social beings, we are also responsible in regard to our fellow beings.

Although our fellow human beings are responsible for meeting their own needs in the first place, we need to develop sensitivity for the needs of others. God entrusted us with a kind of responsibility for others and therefore we care for them, especially for those who cannot care for themselves. We encourage students to develop both kinds of responsibility.

3.5.9 Developing a Caring Attitude and a Willingness to Serve

Developing a sense of responsibility for others will result in developing a caring attitude and a willingness to serve. In God's eyes the one who serves carries out his will and is great. To develop a caring attitude and a willingness to serve will help students to live according to the plan of God for their lives. Not only to live for one's self but to be of help to others will result in a better sense of self-worth, dignity, self-responsibility and satisfaction.

3.5.10 Integration in Society and the Church Community

The scope of social awareness needs to be widened. Although we do not share all the values and traits of our society we are part of it. We want students to be able to integrate themselves in society as well as in the church community. We cannot really care for and serve the people of society if we are not willing to be part of society. And we cannot care for and serve the church community if we are not willing to be part of it. For this reason we encourage the students to enter the integration process of church and society.

3.5.11 Creating a Positive and Healthful Community by Playing and Celebrating Together

One of the human needs is to play and to celebrate. Playing and celebrating together is one contribution to a positive and healthful community. We encourage students to concentrate on their studies but also to create, to enter and to enrich the university community in this social way.

3.5.12 Developing Ecological Awareness and Activities

God has entrusted our planet earth to man. Slowly but surely this world is being destroyed by humankind. We want to help students to develop an ecological awareness. They need information on what is happening worldwide but also on how they can contribute to a better handling of our immediate environment. We encourage them to actively help preserve and

care for the environment they live in.

3.5.13 Learning to Cooperate with those in Authority

Someone needs to lead; someone needs to have authority. God entrusts people with leadership and authority and holds the leadership accountable. He takes their leadership seriously. Therefore, we expect our students to learn to cooperate with and respect those in leadership and authority no matter which part of the university or the community they lead.

4 In Closing

The outline presented here focused our attention on the holistic perspective of Seventh-day Adventist education in regard to educational goals for student life on a Christian university campus. It is a conglomerate of Adventist basic beliefs, current social reality, and experience gained thus far. It remains open for correction, additions, and further insight.

The outlined educational goals have a great impact on how we deal with students, how we develop our rules and regulations, what non-academic opportunities we offer our students. Therefore, the next step will be to ask how we put these goals into practice on our campuses. We need to clarify who will be responsible for reaching specific goals and objectives. It is necessary and desirable that all the academic and non-academic areas are combined in reaching these goals. All of our rules, regulations, and guidelines must reflect our educational goals and help to reach them.

Once we have spelled out our specific goals and objectives we can begin to implement them creatively on our Adventist university campuses.