2013

2013 Research at Andrews

Andrews University
hadn’t yet signed the Schengen Agreement, which allows for the free movement of people across borders within member states. He said, “We would love to, but that would cause us a problem with the United Kingdom [which has not yet signed] so we probably are never going to.” It makes you think about the complexities of the European Union, and changes how you view the EU a bit.

Myers’ time in Germany has also influenced her other research projects, one of which is a paper for the Midwest Political Science Association that examines the effects of privatization of the National Health Service in the United Kingdom. “In some ways it’s an extension of the discussion about austerity measures,” she says. “When people start talking about austerity measures, they often start looking for private solutions to public problems, and there’s high pressure to contract out government services.” What happens when a country runs long-term private contracts like those of the National Health Service, Myers says, is that the money usually ends up in private hands, thus contributing to income inequality.

Public policy, the system of environmental, housing, educational, welfare and healthcare policies that provide for the public good, has interested Myers since her graduate studies at Western Michigan University. “I’m very interested in issues of inequality, particularly in terms of economics, wage inequality, and income inequality. I think if we as scholars understand those things better, then hopefully we can educate people to understand them,” she says. “It’s very easy as an academic to write to your field, but if you can write in a way that non-specialists understand what you’re talking about and educate students to understand the real consequences of policy choices, then you can really make a change.

The conference was sponsored by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists’ Office of Archives, Statistics & Research and organized with the help of Andrews University’s Office of Research & Creative Scholarship. The General Conference has commissioned several research projects in the past, but this conference marked the first GC-sponsored partnership with Adventist researchers around the world. Many of the projects presented focused on describing the behavior of Adventist youth populations, global church communities, or pastoral families. These projects can provide valuable data for the General Conference, and can help them institute new policies or modify existing ones to promote the wellbeing of their members.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists funded many of the researchers who presented, a “validation that what we’re doing is important,” says David Sedlacek, professor of family ministry and discipleship and director of masters’ programs in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Sedlacek presented the preliminary results of his own study, titled “Role Demands, Family Stressors, and Strategies for the Alleviation of Stressors in Pastors’ Families.” His research has immediate applications to how the church cares for its pastors—his study reported a high rate of depression, anxiety, addictive practices, loneliness and isolation in Seventh-day Adventist pastors and their families. With new interest in Adventist researchers’ work, trends like those Sedlacek has observed can be counteracted. “Our research provides a systematic way to make evidence-based changes, and to create best practices for the church,” says Sedlacek.

Alina Baltazar, director of the Center for Substance Abuse Education and Master of Social Work program director, also presented the preliminary results of her research, which investigates the reasons for participating—or not participating—in typical risk behaviors. [See “The Adventist Advantage: The Health Risk Study and Adventist Influence” on page 3.]

Conference attendees reported being inspired by the chance to connect with other Adventist colleagues and discover a network of Adventist researchers, and were “happy to know that their research is becoming a basis for church policy and decision-making,” says Galina Stele, research and program evaluation assistant in the Office of Archives, Statistics & Research.

A second conference has been planned for November 2013, to be held at the General Conference Headquarters in Silver Spring, Md. Its focus is “Discipling, Retaining & Reclaiming: Summit on Nurture and Retention,” and will include Adventist scholars, church leaders, and representatives from all 13 world divisions of the church.