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Keri Suarez
Andrews University

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The Idea of a University

CHANGING OUR STUDENTS’ WORLD

BY KERI SUAREZ

At a recent address, Andrews University president Niels-Erik Andreasen reflected upon a book written in 1852 by John Henry Newman entitled, *The Idea of a University*. John, at the time the leader of a new Christian university in Dublin, Ireland, began his new assignment by asking, “What, at its heart, should a university be about?” John questioned if the main goal should be to help students get a job? To make money? To discover new knowledge? Or was the purpose of a university to prepare students for their chosen profession? He concluded the answer was “yes” to all of the above; but even more importantly, a university should teach students to think clearly, to communicate truthfully and effectively, to be informed about the mysteries of life—both those within us and around us—to become faithful, to act morally, and to become responsible. “Whether or not there is a job waiting for students after graduation,” commented Niels-Erik, “this kind of university education has great merit on its own.

“You may well object that those ideas are about 160 years old and the university has surely changed completely in the interval. Perhaps the main task of a university nowadays is to prepare students for a stable and well-paying job,” continued Niels-Erik.

More recently, in 1992, Jaroslav Pelikan, a professor at Yale University, wrote a book with a title similar to Newman’s: *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination*. Jaroslav concluded the original idea of a university was still valid—it still has value all its own. “And it is that value we celebrate here at Andrews University,” says Niels-Erik. “Here our students will begin their pursuit of higher education; they will learn to think clearly and to communicate truthfully and effectively. Our students alongside their professors will marvel over the mysteries of life, affirm their faith, learn to act morally, and become responsible Christians changing the world around them. This is the foundation on which their reputation as committed, competent Christians will be built and where the reputation of this good Seventh-day Adventist Christian university will be made.”

Framed within our mission—Seek Knowledge. Affirm Faith. Change the World—we share these stories from Andrews University. First, we take a close look at the birth of the Undergraduate Learning Center, located in the heart of our campus in Berrien Springs, Michigan. This academic building will become a hub of teaching and learning. Here students and professors will have daily meetings of minds—informing, inspiring and supporting the finest ideas the Seventh-day Adventist Church has developed since the first Adventist university—Andrews University—was founded in 1874. Then, we will turn our focus to a member of our faculty who helps students around the world study for an Andrews University degree through our International Development Program. The program is headed by Dawn Dulhunty and her husband, Paul. They have dedicated their lives—both personally and professionally—to humanitarian aid. Today, they work tirelessly at multiple international sites around the world, shaping the lives and professions of countless individuals through the International Development Program.

Keri Suarez is a media relations specialist in the Office of Integrated Marketing & Communication at Andrews University.