

FOCUS



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Why Teach Undergraduate Leadership?

Leaders Who Change the World

Vol. 46 No. 2



Niels-Erik Andreasen
President

As the world has become “smaller,” educators recognize their work must become more international in scope. That truth has become both more pronounced and urgent during this latest economic downturn, the worst since the Great Depression. First, the housing bubble

in the United States brought to light the fact financial institutions and investors around the world held bundles of nearly worthless financial papers that created huge losses. Second, it became clear that not only did American homebuyers over-extend themselves, sovereign states, certainly in Europe, the so-called PIIGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain), borrowed beyond their ability to pay back. We now know for certain that the world economy is interconnected and no nation can remain independent of the world community.

That realization has placed renewed pressure on educators to take a world view of education as well. If all economies are interconnected, then all economists are interrelated, and the people who drive the economy forward cannot remain “islands” for long. Education must take account of this new reality. Andrews must be in the forefront of this new internationalization, for it prepares its graduates for service to both a world church and a world economy. What initiatives can Andrews undertake in the race to become responsive to this new world?

- a. There is our world enrollment of students. As this time we enroll just over 3,500 students in campus programs, and over 4,000 in off-campus programs offered literally around the world. The experiences we earn from these initiatives make us think internationally about our educational goals. For example, during the first weekend of June I participated in the graduation of 34 candidates for the DMin program in West-Central Africa. They have been taught how to become effective church leaders in Africa. Yet their education was delivered by means of an Andrews program of study designed and accredited in North America. Future such programs will rely more on African faculty participants. That is an example of internationalization of education.
- b. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has asked Andrews University to see if it can align itself with Griggs University, a virtual distance learning institution owned and operated by the church and located in the world church headquarters. Andrews is examining this invitation very carefully. Distance education is generally delivered online these days, but it can be combined with other forms of delivery, such as intensives for cohorts of students. That initiative is important for at least two reasons. It makes it possible for our church to reach many more students, including adult learners, without building costly educational facilities everywhere. Second, it will bring together students and teachers from different parts of the world who can further internationalize education.
- c. Our undergraduate students need to participate in this trend. Andrews is a very special place for that to happen due to our international faculty, staff and students, representing almost 100 countries. I dare say that few of our graduates will ever meet individuals in the workplace about whom they do not have some level of understanding from their college days. But beyond that it is our hope that all students attending Andrews will touch the world in some way, e.g. through mission or teaching service, a study tour, a semester abroad, an international faculty person, a class discussion about world issues or the like.

We may resent the way international economic developments can impact our economy, but that is not likely to change. We can respond to it by preparing our graduates to live their lives informed about, and be responsible for the way their actions will impact, the world. I am absolutely convinced that the very same developments will characterize the future of our church. In fact I will go further and suggest the way to solve the world's economic and political problems must include education. I believe this will be the new frontier in education and Adventist education ought to be ahead of the curve. Andrews is ready to go!

FOCUS

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On the cover: Allan Buller, President Niels-Erik Andreasen and Mickey Buller pose for a congratulatory shot after the official groundbreaking for Buller Hall, April 30, 2010. Photo by Martin Lee, IMC staff photographer.