

Developing A Financial Future For Your School

David Branum, Principal, Kingsway College, Ontario

Among the many issues facing our Adventist schools today, finances continue to be a primary concern. With rising costs and the inability to pass those costs on in the form of tuition increases, schools must develop alternative funding. There are three primary areas that schools can develop to adequately finance their operations. These areas—development, student enrollment, and alternative financial resources—will be addressed at the academy and at the elementary level below.

Academy

Development of the alumni base can be a major contributing factor in the overall financial outlook of academies. The basic rule is that 80 percent of the donations come from 20 percent of your alumni base. In order to cultivate that 20 percent, relationships must be built with these individuals. Visitations and regular communication are essential ingredients in developing a large donor base. The development and nurturing of local area alumni chapters can also be a good source of development monies. Alumni chapters are especially effective in raising money for specific projects. These chapters should be based in areas where there is a significant population of alumnus. Regular communication with the chapter leaders, as well as yearly visits, are effective tools in the development of alumni chapters.



One of the key factors in the development of the student base is having a positive, Christian atmosphere on campus. This is, after all, why we exist as an educational institution. This information then needs to be disseminated to the constituency. Students can be your best recruiters. If they're having a positive year, then your enrollment will reflect that in the following year. A marketing strategy is essential in developing a relationship with potential students and their parents. A website, brochures, information packets, touring groups and, especially, individualized visitations are effective tools in projecting your school's mission.

Lastly, a vitally important resource, especially to boarding schools, is the development of industry. This not only provides jobs for students, but a source of income for the school. A profitable industry can be a great source of capital funds eventually financing a school's depreciation and their capital needs 100 percent! The key to an effective industry is to operate it like a business and provide for profit-sharing.

Elementary

Development for an elementary school first requires having the pastor support you. This means having the pastor in the school on a regular basis providing various services. Second, various PR activities that bring church members to the school on a regular basis promotes the school, and helps to keep the school at the forefront of people's thoughts. Activities such as fun fairs, open house, and concerts are some examples of PR activities. Another area of development is the development of donations on a regular basis by church members with strong, financial means. This means developing and cultivating a regular relationship with these individuals.

One of the key ingredients in attracting students is providing a high-quality, Christian educational environment. Parents today are looking for more than just a Christian education. They expect a quality education, as well as a Christian environment. If a church constituency cannot provide both of these, it is better off using the money for other needs. Another way for church schools to increase their enrollment is through individual visitation. Every church family with school-age children should be visited by the pastor and the principal of the school together.

Elementary schools should also develop alternative financial resources. These can range from various fund-raising events, to citrus fruit programs, to developing relationships between the school and the parent's places of business. An example of this would be the receipt of good, used computers from a parent's workplace where they have decided to upgrade.

The future of our Adventist educational system depends on many factors, not just finances. Our educational system is no doubt very important to us. We spend millions of dollars on it every year across North America. Unfortunately, enrolment continues to decline in spite of our efforts. Only if and when we can determine why there are a number of growing Adventist families who are not interested in Adventist education, for whatever reason, can we begin to solve our financial issues. It stands to reason that an increase in interest in our schools means a proportionate increase in monetary resources. Let us determine the issues and provide parents with the schools that they desire for their children.

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