

Seventh-day Adventist Business Teachers Conferences

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Since 1997, Seventh-day Adventist Business Teachers Conferences have been conducted every two or three years on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States. Since the first conference, participation has expanded to include participants from both Adventist and non-Adventist institutions, institutions in the North American Division and in other divisions of the world Seventh-day Adventist Church¹

Historical Roots and Development

During the 1970s several of the leaders at Seventh-day Adventist business schools in North America were accountants by training. Because of this, some of these deans and department chair persons had opportunities to meet with each other on an informal basis while attending the American Accounting Association annual conference. During this period, little collaboration took place among Seventh-day Adventist business faculty members.

During succeeding decades, leadership of Seventh-day Adventist business schools gradually changed, eventually representing a variety of business disciplines in addition to accounting. Since no formal linkages existed among Adventist business schools or business scholars outside of institutions, relationships among business faculty members tended to be the relationships among the scholars at their own institution.

During 1995 and 1996 the idea of convening a conference for Seventh-day Adventist business scholars surfaced during discussions among faculty members and the Dean of the School of Business at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Purpose

The first conference, which convened in 1997 in Berrien Springs, Michigan, had two goals: (1) Provide Seventh-day Adventist business scholars an opportunity to write and present scholarly papers in a collaborative, supportive atmosphere; (2) Encourage Seventh-day Adventist business scholars to develop personal relationships with each other.

Faculty members and leaders at the Andrews University School of Business believed that convening a conference for Seventh-day Adventist business scholars in North America would be a way to encourage faculty members to write and present scholarly papers at other conferences. It was believed that such scholarly activity could be a positive influence for faculty development. It might also encourage Seventh-day Adventist business scholars to make contributions to the wider scholarly dialogue already taking place among business scholars who participated in professional academic conferences sponsored by associations representing various business academic disciplines such as accounting, management, marketing, economics, and other disciplines typically represented by schools of business faculty worldwide.

Those involved in the initial planning for the first conference also realized that many business faculty members who worked at Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in North America did not know business faculty members outside of their own institution. It was believed that if Adventist business scholars knew each other, this might open up opportunities to enhance professional relationships among like-minded scholars who share the Adventist biblical worldview. Furthermore, professional relationships might open up opportunities for collaboration among scholars.

Funding

Initial funding for the first conference was supported by the Andrews University School of Business. In succeeding conferences, additional financial support, used to accommodate guest speakers from outside organizations, came from Adventist Health.²

Conference Themes

Conference themes over the years have tended to emphasize the preparation of business teachers for the future business education, the mission of Christian business schools, faith and learning in business education, business ethics, and the international context of business education. Scholarly papers and plenary speeches presented at the conferences span a wide scope of relevant topics including accounting, management, information systems, cross-cultural management, marketing, economics, business education leadership, pedagogy, business ethics, academic publishing, theology, Christian spirituality, academic publishing, and business research.

Attendance

Initial invitations for the first conference went to business scholars in North America; however, word of mouth spread the news outside North America and among Seventh-day Adventist scholars who teach at non-Adventist institutions. Attendance at the conferences has ranged from thirty-eight scholars to over fifty scholars. Scholars who have attended the conferences have come from several countries including the Argentina, Australia, Canada, Columbia, Ghana, Haiti, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Republic of South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Zimbabwe. Scholars from over thirty Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities, and scholars from more than fifteen other colleges and universities, have attended the conferences over the years.³

Collaboration

Some papers presented at the Seventh-day Adventist business teachers conferences have been authored by multiple authors. Plenary speeches have been given by business scholars, theologians, and practicing business professionals. In addition, a project involving several business scholars culminated in the development of the *Scriptural Foundations for Business* monograph series published by the Andrews University Press.

SOURCES

"Business teachers meet at Andrews." *Focus* [Andrews University], Summer 1998.

Lechleitner, Elizabeth. "Business Teachers Embrace Spirituality, Scholarship, and Service at Summer Conference." *Lake Union Herald*, October 2005.

NOTES

1. Information throughout this article was collected through Interviews with Ann Gibson, Ph.D., Berrien Springs, Michigan, September 21, 2016, and Allen Stembridge, Ph.D., Berrien Springs, Michigan, August 25, 2016. Additional information was taken selected conference schedules and promotional brochures, Seventh-day Adventist Business Teachers Conferences, 1997-2014.
2. Elizabeth Lechleitner, "Business Teachers Embrace Spirituality, Scholarship, and Service at Summer Conference," *Lake Union Herald*, October 2005, 37.
3. "Business teachers meet at Andrews," *Focus* [Andrews University], Summer 1998, 7.

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