

The Accreditation Papers

Weimar's Oscillating Academics

By David Grams

The quality of the academic program at Weimar College rises and falls like the blood sugar levels of our NEWSTART patients. Of course, the published bulletin remains the same, silently promising a quality curriculum for all. And what is the result of this immense disparity? Large numbers of very frustrated students who "vote with their feet" and prematurely exit our college with a bitter taste in their mouths.

Make no mistake. I reluctantly report this sad reality with a heart burdened beyond belief. This is my third time here at Weimar as a teacher, and I am pained to the core over this dilemma. Now, the happy news is that Don Christensen and Randy Horning have been greatly blessed in assembling a college faculty commensurate with the "golden years" of the late 80's and early 90's. Truly, it is an honor to have a little part in this grand renewal!

However, quite honestly I relish the moment with a sharp tinge of uneasiness, for I know that the euphoria will be short-lived at best. And why? For one simple reason: Qualified faculty remain only briefly at Weimar because there is no living wage. As an unvarying consequence, teachers are often more transitory than the students! The result is obvious; our educational effectiveness and reputation routinely suffer from crippling variations in quality.

Now despite multiple comparisons to the low wages of other self-supporting institutions, the basic problem for Weimar remains unresolved. And it is simply this: Weimar is not a short-term 4 or 9-month training center, wonderful as those institutions are. Instead, Weimar is a unique school that has historically portrayed itself as a college capable of preparing students to witness for Christ in professional fields of endeavor.

Consequently, we seek to attract teachers who often have invested a great deal of time and money in their occupations yet who are quite willing to live a more spartan lifestyle than most of their peers. Thus, the issue is certainly not one of commitment or sacrifice; rather, we face the challenge of offering salaries appropriate to our mission, a mission clearly distinguished from schools that are not preparing students to enter the professions of education and health.

It would literally stun many friends of Weimar to know that a number of well-known and "conservative" Adventist educators have expressed a desire to teach here. And why haven't they? Keen minds have yet to observe a commitment at Weimar to a long-range institutional plan that demonstrates itself in consistent academics and adequate "care" of the faculty.

When this "missing link" is put in place...watch out! Weimar will be a model school for spiritual and academic innovations in First World Countries. As Ellen White so succinctly intones: We'll never carry the gospel in its fullness to other countries until we learn the essentials of true Adventist Education in America. What a glorious future for Weimar!