

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Trustees, La Sierra University  
**FROM:** Creation-Evolution Study Group  
**DATE:** February 9, 2011  
**RE:** Report and Recommendations

During its June 16, 2010 executive session, the La Sierra Board of Trustees (the "**Board**") appointed the Creation-Evolution Study Group (the "**Committee**") to investigate the validity of the following allegations against the biology program at La Sierra University:

- The Biblical account of six literal consecutive 24-hour days of creation has been discredited and labeled as merely figurative language;<sup>1</sup>
- The theory of evolution is taught as having greater scientific merit than the Biblical account of creation and as more accurately portraying the origin and development of life; and
- Students who maintain a traditional SDA perspective with regard to creation are marginalized and sometimes ridiculed for holding this position.

These claims grew out of the series of events that are summarized in the chronology included as Attachment 1 of this report.

The Committee has completed its review, and this memorandum contains the report and recommendations of the Committee to the Board. This memorandum is intended for internal campus distribution only.

## Committee Review

The Committee took the following steps to review the allegations:

1. Asked the university provost to conduct a survey of present and past students to determine their perceptions of what is actually being taught at La Sierra. The Committee gave a great deal of weight to the survey results, because the Committee believes that the best way to determine what is being taught is to examine what is being learned.

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<sup>1</sup> The Seventh-day Adventist denomination's Fundamental Belief number six states the following: "God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth' and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was 'very good,' declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)"

2. Reviewed the draft report (the “**Report**”) prepared by the visiting team of the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (“**AAA**”). In addition, the Committee reviewed a consulting side letter prepared by the AAA visiting team, and addressed to the administration and the Board, specifically addressing the creation-evolution allegations (the “**AAA Letter**”). At the November 11, 2010 meeting of the Board, the Committee gave an interim report to the Board at which it told the Board that the Committee did not believe the Committee was qualified to evaluate the biology curriculum. (A copy of the interim report is included as Attachment 2.) Instead, the Committee recommended that the Board use the opportunity of the AAA visit to get an independent perspective of the creation/evolution allegations from individuals with an expertise in this area. The Committee believes the Report and the AAA Letter provide a helpful and objective perspective of the issue.
3. Reviewed the *Report on Issues Surrounding the Handling of Creation, Evolution, and Related Matters at La Sierra University* prepared in early 2010 by several past and present members of the Board (the “**Informal Report**”). While the Informal Report provided information on materials being used, and presentations being made, in a few biology classes, the Committee gave little weight to the Informal Report for several reasons: (a) it is impractical to judge an entire biology curriculum based on limited syllabi and class presentations without examining how the materials were used in a class and without also considering their context in the broader curriculum of a four-year program; (b) the Committee lacks expertise to evaluate curriculum; (c) such an evaluation is an improper role for the Board; (d) even if such an evaluation were practical, the Committee believed it was far better to use the survey as a tool to consider the results; and (e) the Informal Report addressed some issues not pertinent to the Board’s charge to the Committee.
4. Had extensive discussions with the university’s provost regarding both the creation/evolution allegations and possible recommendations for addressing them.

## Survey Results

The raw survey results (including the survey questions) are included as Attachment 3 of this report. The survey was prepared and conducted by the provost with input from the Committee, as well as suggestions from the faculty of the Biology Department, external consultants, and the university president. The survey was field tested, to ensure validity and reliability of the items, on a group of general biology students who were on campus during the summer. The survey was administered through the Zoomerang.com website. The survey asked participants to respond to seventeen statements by indicating (a) strongly agree; (b) agree; (c) neutral; (d) disagree; or (e) strongly disagree. The provost’s office e-mailed survey invitations on August 31, 2010, to 264 general biology students and 134 biology majors from the past four years plus students from 2000. Twenty-nine invitations were returned because of invalid e-mail addresses, leaving a total of 369 delivered invitations. Follow up reminders were sent, and on September 20, the survey was closed. As of that date, 151 individuals (40%) visited the survey site, and 91 individuals completed the survey, which is

nearly a 25% response rate.<sup>2</sup> Forty-nine respondents offered comments. In addition to the responses to the survey items, the comments were reviewed by the Committee.

The Committee thought many of the responses were generally positive, however the survey results do raise clear concerns. In summarizing the survey results, below, this Report divides the range of five possible survey responses into two categories—(a) agree plus strongly agree, representing a positive outcome with respect to the item surveyed; and (b) neutral, disagree and strongly disagree, representing varying levels of shortcoming with respect to such survey item. The results are as follows:

*#1—It is appropriate to present evolutionary theories in biology classes at La Sierra University. 92% agreed; 7% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#2—Evolution is presented as a scientific working theory in biology classes. 84% agreed; 15% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#3—The differences between theories, facts, and beliefs were explained in my biology classes. 76% agreed; 25% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#4—The changing and always tentative nature of even strongly-established theories was explained in my biology classes. 74% agreed; 23% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#5—Data relevant to testing the strengths and weaknesses of evolutionary theories were discussed in my biology classes. 63% agreed; 34% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#6—Evolutionary theories were taught as the factual explanation of the origin of life. 49% disagreed; 49% were neutral or agreed.<sup>3</sup>*

*#7—My professors presented helpful ways of relating science and religious faith. 69% agreed; 30% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#8—The Seventh-day Adventist view of creation was presented in biology classes. 50% agreed; 44% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#9—The Seventh-day Adventist view of creation was supported in biology classes. 40% agreed, and 53% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#10—Science is an effective, but tentative, way to understand and explain natural processes. 83% agreed and 16% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#11—Science offers an effective way to prove beliefs about God and God's creation. 52% agreed and 45% were neutral or disagreed.*

*#12—Science and religion are valid but different ways of understanding the world. 67% agreed, and 32% were neutral or disagreed.*

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<sup>2</sup> According to the provost, a normal expected response rate is 24% to 26%. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol6/issue2/sheehan.html>

<sup>3</sup> Unlike the other survey items, in question 6, disagreement reflects a successful outcome, with agreement/neutrality reflecting a shortcoming.

#13—*Science is unable to definitively answer questions about the ultimate origins of human life.* 57% agreed and 39% were neutral or disagreed.

#14—*Biology professors treated my questions and views on issues of origins, science, and religious faith with dignity and respect.* 71% agreed, and 20% were neutral or disagreed.

#15—*Biology professors encouraged my faith in a personal God.* 69% agreed and 24% were neutral or disagreed.

#16—*Biology professors supported my faithfulness to my religious heritage.* 69% agree and 24% were neutral or disagreed.

#17—*I would encourage others to study biology at La Sierra University.* 73% agreed and 25% were neutral or disagreed.<sup>4</sup>

Even though there is room for improvement in most of these areas, survey questions 6, 8 and 9 require particular attention. The only way in which to fully benchmark these results, however, would be to have this same survey conducted by La Sierra's sister institutions in North America. Without such comparisons, any criticism of La Sierra's effectiveness at supporting Adventist beliefs relative to other institutions is speculative, at best. It would be helpful if other Adventist institutions could work on the curriculum challenges surrounding this issue in a collaborative manner.

### **AAA Report and Letter**

The Committee believes the observations regarding this issue in the AAA Report and Letter are consistent with the results of the survey.

The AAA Report made a number of recommendations that relate, either directly or indirectly, to this issue, including the following (with asterisks reflecting "major recommendations"):

1. "[That] administration and faculty enhance the LSU 'open minds' brand and classroom climate for students and faculty with traditional Adventist views, seeking balance by presenting a range of views and supporting student expression according to principles of academic freedom. In particular, the biology and religion faculty, in collaboration with the faculty of the University Studies core courses curriculum, should seek ways to support the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in an 'open' manner and monitor effectiveness through program review."
2. "[That] the board review its own governance structure and function to enhance . . . [a]ssignment to the university administration, at the levels of provost, dean and department chair the responsibility to mentor new faculty into campus ethos, and the educational mission of the institution and Adventist education in general."

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<sup>4</sup> Some student comments indicated that the reasons for not agreeing with this statement were often unrelated to the creation/evolution issues.

3. “[That] the board and administration develop and implement a strategy to resolve the creation-evolution controversy, rebuild the reputation of the university, and regain confidence of the constituency.”
4. “[That] the administration review its approach to conflict resolution by taking steps such as the following:
  - “a. Demonstrate careful, timely and open inquiry with conflict involving students/alumni, faculty, staff, or administration, to identify any disagreement involving the institution’s internal policies, external regulatory requirements, educational integrity and its unique mission.
  - “b. Acknowledge and appropriately respond to any issue, no matter how minor. This may result in but is not limited to, adjustment to institutional services, changes in curricula or programs, review of faculty or staff assignment, modifications of institutional policy, refocus on institutional mission, and engagement with trustees.
  - “c. Evaluate the implemented changes or modifications through normal institutional procedures for outcomes assessment, with timely reporting on the conflict resolution and/or outcomes from the changes and/or modifications instituted.
  - “d. Acknowledge and communicate the resolution of the conflict, using appropriate internal or external communication channels, and identify all steps taken toward a resolution or remedy in response to any infraction on standard procedures, along with a commitment to sharing the results of these implemented changes in a timely manner.”
5. “The board, administration, department chairs, and faculty ensure that a biblical ‘worldview’ is the framework for all courses taught to support the integration of faith and learning.”

In addition, the AAA Report included the following comments:

- “A number of faculty in biology appear to make a sharp distinction between science and religion, with Creation not a matter of science but the domain of personal belief and courses in the School of Religion. For them, integration of faith and learning within the science classroom and content area seems to be fundamentally incompatible, except for devotional reflections or prayer that might be offered.”
- “For the past 18 months the university has been under scrutiny by a variety of constituencies over what has been labeled ‘the evolution-creation controversy’ in biology and to a lesser degree, also in the School of Religion. A number of websites, including [www.educatetruth.com](http://www.educatetruth.com), [www.adventisttoday.com](http://www.adventisttoday.com), [www.spectrummagazine.org](http://www.spectrummagazine.org) and others have continued an almost non-stop public dialog on this issue. This public discussion has forced the university board, and administration to spend much of its public relations energy on addressing this issue. Although the University has continued to promote the many positive aspects of the University, this topic has been, at times, all consuming.”

The AAA Letter presented a more detailed discussion of this issue. While the visiting team chose not to review the biology curriculum by direct examination of syllabi and lecture notes, three members of the visiting team<sup>5</sup> spent approximately three hours interviewing the entire biology faculty as a group. The visiting team's private observations and recommendations resulted from that unscheduled interview as well as from the regular aspects of their site visit. These observations are summarized as follows:

1. Notwithstanding the vicious nature of the attacks, La Sierra bears some responsibility for the controversy.
2. Some biology faculty use evolution to explain creation.
3. Some faculty seem averse to sharing the position of the church on creation. Many, however, share their personal faith outside the classroom.
4. Biology faculty are honest in admitting the struggle to reconcile faith and science.
5. La Sierra's reputation on this issue was damaged by public statements by some biology faculty. La Sierra exacerbated the problem by using some of these same faculty to teach a course meant to help address the church's view of creation. That further damaged the school's credibility with respect to the teaching of the Adventist view of creation.
6. Faculty from the School of Religion have not helped to clarify the issue and may have added to the controversy.
7. Some faculty statements could be construed as intimidating to those students believing in a Biblical creation, and students are given little classroom support of their faith.
8. The hiring of a non-Christian faculty member, and the representations made to the board in the hiring process, may have raised questions about the faith and mission of the school.

Based on these observations, the AAA Letter made the following six recommendations:

- "1. Ensure high quality science within an Adventist faith-based context.
- "2. That the 101 seminar class be taught by a variety of professors including some that are overtly creationists so the students can have an opportunity to evaluate their own personal origins worldview.
- "3. Honestly and intentionally identify and work with faculty who are having difficulty integrating faith in the classroom. Think of loving and effective strategies to move them to a place where they can celebrate and be enthusiastic about faith positions and hold those positions in tension with data from the natural world.
- "4. Evaluate effectiveness of # 1-3 above.

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<sup>5</sup> Larry Blackmer, Lisa Beardsley and David Steen.

“5. Be honest in all your communications.

“6. Be timely and as transparent as possible in dealing with these issues.”

### **Committee Observations**

The issue of reconciling science and belief generally, and evolution and creation in particular, is neither a new issue, nor is it unique to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. In his book *The Prism and the Rainbow*, Joel W. Martin, Ph.D.<sup>6</sup> makes the following observations:

“To some extent, the issue [of evolution and creation] can be resolved by two very simple statements:

“1. Religion is not science and should never masquerade as such.

“2. Science is restricted to observing and testing phenomena in the natural world around us and should never be used to argue for or against a particular faith or set of religious beliefs.

“By definition, then, these two areas of human endeavor, science and religion, address different issues, each using distinctive methods of inquiry, and there should be no ‘debate.’ But that is not the end of the story, and confusion still seems to reign. Often discussion on the topic has been hostile; Baptist minister and Harvard professor Peter Gomes describes modernity as ‘a series of guerrilla wars between an egocentric Christianity and an arrogant secular science, neither of which is prepared to concede to the other, neither of which can achieve absolute and unambiguous victory, and neither of which is prepared to take any prisoners.’

“Arrogance continues to play a large role on both sides of the issue, with some (not all) vocal devotees on one side claiming to know the mind of God and some (not all) on the other side claiming that God does not exist. The majority of people adopt a more humble view, and many see common ground that is fertile for discussion with potential benefits to both science and theology.”

The Committee believes that the AAA Letter’s observations about the university bearing some responsibility in this matter by failing to act promptly and losing credibility have merit. Although the survey results have a number of positive aspects, this Report focuses on the areas in which the university must improve.

Nevertheless, at least as worrisome as the issue of how the university’s biology curriculum presents creation and evolution is the hostility and lack of civility with which some members of the constituency have conducted the dialogue of this issue. While coursework in this area comprises a few weeks of time in one or two classes taken by about four percent of the entire student body, the need for civil and reasonable discourse is a matter that should be part of all conversation, both on campus and within the larger Adventist community. And it should be one that is based on facts, not one fueled by speculation and rumor.

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<sup>6</sup> **Joel W. Martin** is a marine biologist and invertebrate zoologist who is Chief of the Division of Invertebrate Studies and Curator of Crustacea at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

So while the issue is not as dire as some have suggested, the problem is of more significance than the campus may appreciate. To its credit, the university has recently begun to take more comprehensive steps to address the issue, which are detailed in Attachment 4 of this Report. These steps include discussions with the biology faculty, refining the freshman seminar, and attempting to open a dialogue with sister institutions regarding this issue. In order to address the issue fully, the campus should be willing to accept continuing constructive input from outside the immediate campus community. Whether one is a student, professor, administrator or Board member, it is human nature to react defensively to criticism of any sort. The key for all concerned, however, is to give reasonable criticism meaningful consideration and, where appropriate, prompt adjustment. With the benefit of hindsight, one cannot help but wonder whether much of the current tension might have been avoided if some of the steps noted in Attachment 4 had been implemented earlier in the process.

Two of the most important areas requiring resolution involve the issue of communication—both between faculty and students and between the university and the larger Adventist community.

### **Faculty Communication with Students**

Anecdotally, various Committee members have heard students say that denominational views were not respected or supported in the classroom. Both the survey results and the recommendations and comments from the AAA Report and AAA Letter reflect a need to do a better job in this area.

The educational enterprise by its very nature introduces students to new ideas and new ways of looking at the world that are often very different from what they have known before. This can sometimes create tension and anxiety, but never more so than when the new ideas seem to contradict deeply held beliefs whether in the social, political or religious domain. It is paramount, therefore, that faculty members exercise great care when dealing with some of these more difficult issues. Teachers have an enormous responsibility because they can be highly influential in shaping the student's thinking and conceptual framework which may last a lifetime. That is an awesome calling and it is one that has to be discharged with the greatest sensitivity, with a generous and patient spirit and with a loving attitude. Even the most sensitive handling of these topics may be disturbing and disorienting to some students, so it is a paramount duty of the teacher to reduce the tensions of such "cognitive dissonance" as much as possible, and to give students tools to cope with the tensions.

To achieve this goal, it may be helpful for the biology faculty in particular (and maybe the theology faculty as well since these two disciplines seem to face these challenges in the most palpable manner) to engage in a workshop with individuals who understand the unique challenges faced by teachers and students alike in the collision of science and faith. Faculty must help students understand how wrenching the conflict can be between a core belief and views that seem to undermine that core belief, and how to live with the resulting tension.

### **Campus Communication with Students, Parents, and Constituents**

La Sierra is a Seventh-day Adventist institution that receives financial support from the denomination in the form of subsidies from the Pacific Union Conference. It also receives tuition from parents and contributions from donors who are members of the church. In return, the church and its constituents reasonably expect the university to support the beliefs of the church, including Fundamental Belief number six. When donors give to La Sierra, they rely on the

university's faithfulness to its purpose, and the university holds donations in trust for use in achieving the mission that it represents to its donors.

While the Board is committed to the exercise of academic freedom, it is important to remember that a school's academic freedom is exercised in the context of certain fiduciary obligations. If that freedom is not exercised responsibly and within the context of the overall mission of the university, it negatively affects the university as a whole and indirectly affects other faculty and staff. When faculty members make statements or take actions that some have characterized as reckless (whether publicly or in the classroom), it affects the community's view of the institution and the credibility of its mission.

The university should respect the right of its stakeholders to be heard. This includes not only faculty, staff, administration, students and the Board, but also off-campus constituents, including parents, lay people, ministers, and teachers. The Committee agrees with the recommendations in the AAA Report regarding the need for the university to review its approach to conflict resolution with steps that should include timely inquiry, appropriate response, institutional modifications, and prompt reporting to the larger community. The university should listen to all civil and constructive communication. At the same time, the off-campus community must remember that one of the goals of the academic endeavor is to challenge students to grow, and to learn to think for themselves. Even though the Adventist community takes great pride in its educational system, it must remember that one of the inevitable consequences of having an educational system is a diversity of thought and ideas.

The Committee agrees with the AAA Report statement regarding the need to "implement a strategy to resolve the creation/evolution controversy, rebuild the reputation of the university, and regain the confidence of the constituency." Although biology faculty must take the lead in this process, some may not necessarily be the most effective communicators outside their classrooms. Given the sensitive nature of this matter, biology faculty are encouraged to coordinate the development of off-campus communications with administration, perhaps with the assistance of on-campus public relations expertise, giving meaningful consideration to input from key church leadership.

## **Summary of Findings**

Based on its review, the Committee makes the following findings:

1. The Committee recognizes and respects the work of the biology faculty. Neither their professional competency as biologists nor their character and sincerity are questioned.
2. Instruction at the university, while being strong in many areas, has not adequately presented the denomination's position on the subject of creation.
3. The AAA Report and AAA Letter reflect that there are some biology faculty who do not fairly present the Biblical position of creation as understood and taught by the Adventist Church, but rather support and teach evolutionary processes as a plausible explanation of the origin of life.
4. There is some evidence that students have not always been respected for their belief in the Biblical creation position and some have felt marginalized for their position. The response to those raising such concerns should not be defensive but, instead, should openly acknowledge the problem and work in a collaborative fashion to address these concerns and affirm La Sierra as an Adventist institution.

5. The AAA Report notes, and the Committee agrees, that this controversy has caused the Board to spend considerable energy addressing the issue, and the Board should begin to shift that energy to more positive aspects of the university.

## **Recommendations**

Rather than focusing on laying blame, the Committee believes the key will be to focus on what the university does from this point forward. The Board must rely on the campus to develop, implement and oversee the curriculum. The use of future surveys will enable the Board to focus on results, leaving curriculum management with the faculty and administration.

Based on its review, the Committee recommends that the Board ask the university administration to implement the following actions:

1. Accept and implement the recommendations from the AAA Letter and the AAA Report with respect to the issues noted in this Report.
2. Develop faculty workshops regarding the challenges of teaching controversial topics raised by this issue, beginning with the biology and religion departments.
3. Continue with its work in progress, as reflected in Attachment 4.
4. Conduct a follow-up survey each year (prior to Board retreat).
5. Provide ongoing reports at each Board meeting, at least until the Board has reviewed the results of two additional annual surveys.
6. Work with the Committee chair and the university's public relations department regarding the release of a public version of the Board's findings and recommendations. Such a report should include the basic results of the survey.
7. Consider hosting a workshop for Adventist colleges and universities in North America on curriculum and methods for teaching creation and evolution.

The Committee also recommends that the Board affirm its support for the president and his administration and confirm its belief that they are the ones in which the Board entrusts the implementation of these recommendations. The Board expects candid and prompt reports of both progress and challenges in this area. In addition, the Board and its individual members should commit to support the administration in these efforts and to focus on the more positive aspects of the university.

**Attachment 1**  
**Sequence of Events**  
**and**  
**Steps Taken by La Sierra University**  
**Regarding the Teaching of Creation & Evolution**

Feb. 20, 2009	Sean Pitman makes presentation about Creation science on La Sierra University campus. Video at: <a href="http://www.detectingdesign.com/videoclips.html#Creation">http://www.detectingdesign.com/videoclips.html#Creation</a>
April 30, 2009	David Asscherick, evangelist from the Central California Conference, writes an open letter to LSU Board Chair and church leaders <a href="http://www.atoday.com/content/president-lsu-responds-atheistic-evolution-allegations">http://www.atoday.com/content/president-lsu-responds-atheistic-evolution-allegations</a>
May 5, 2009	La Sierra sees first e-mail with Asscherick letter, sent to Larry Becker from contacts in Maryland. Becker forwards to administrative team.
May 18, 2009	President Wisbey sends letter responding to Asscherick letter, to Board of Trustees, LSU faculty and staff, and LSU Church leadership team.
May 23, 2009	Lasierrauniversity.net launched as a website critical of La Sierra. University begins conversations with legal counsel.
June 1, 2009	Attorney for <i>Adventist Review</i> initiates contact with lasierrauniversity.net regarding copyright infringement of <i>Review</i> article.
June 2, 2009	Attorney for <i>Adventist Review</i> reveals in correspondence with Shane Hilde that LSU is discussing with legal counsel options for dealing with lasierrauniversity.net and infringement issues on corporate identity.
June 2, 2009	Wisbey sends letter to GC President Jan Paulsen and NAD President Don Schneider requesting help with the developing issue.
June 8, 2009	EducateTruth.com website established to replace the LaSierraUniveristy.net web site.
June 2009	EducateTruth.com seeks 10,000 signatures for a petition to be presented at the November meeting of the LSU Board of Trustees <a href="http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/Sixdaycreation/">http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/Sixdaycreation/</a>
June 11, 2009	Wisbey holds university-wide faculty discussion on Creation issues in Matheson Chapel.
June 17, 2009	Wisbey sends letter to Paulsen, Schneider, Dulan, Thomsen, Beardsley and Blackmer. Letter asks for church to give serious consideration to all issues related to teaching of biology.
Summer 2009	Development of Biology Seminar 111A by the department of biology with input from the School of Religion.

August 12, 2009	Wisbey e-mails <i>Important Reasons to Study Biology at La Sierra University</i> to faculty of La Sierra University with a note of encouragement.
Sept 1, 2009	Gary Bradley interview published by an internet-based news service, <i>Inside Higher Ed</i> . <a href="http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/09/01/evolution">http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/09/01/evolution</a>
Sept 1, 2009	University issues press release regarding Bradley's interview, noting that Bradley's comments do not represent the university's position.
Sept. 11, 2009	LSU Board action requesting Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities to convene a study group (with assistance from the Geoscience Research Institute) to prepare a curriculum for a thorough, balanced and scientifically rigorous affirmation of the SDA belief in a literal, recent six-day creation.
Nov 2, 2009	Shane and Mary Hilde visit w/ President Wisbey, deliver petition, and take a campus tour.
Nov 6, 2009	LSU Faculty Senate takes action of support for biology faculty and requests that Senate Chair express that action to the Board of Trustees. <a href="http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/02/02/qt#219065">http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/02/02/qt#219065</a> and <a href="http://www.atoday.com/content/lsu-faculty-senate-affirm-academic-freedom-biology-colleagues">http://www.atoday.com/content/lsu-faculty-senate-affirm-academic-freedom-biology-colleagues</a>
Nov 11, 2009	Board of Trustees vote the following statement during their Board meeting: <a href="http://www.lasierra.edu/board/Board_Resolution11-09.pdf">http://www.lasierra.edu/board/Board_Resolution11-09.pdf</a> and <a href="http://www.lasierra.edu/board/Board_Statement_of_Support11-09.pdf">http://www.lasierra.edu/board/Board_Statement_of_Support11-09.pdf</a>
Nov 17, 2009	President Wisbey speaks at the PUC Education Council and distributes informational handout regarding the teaching of biology at the university.
Nov 19, 2009	Wisbey updates PUC Executive Committee about the Board of Trustee actions.
Feb 10, 2010	Board Chair Graham and trustee Brad Newton join Wisbey, Trenchard, and Beach for a meeting with biology department faculty.
Feb 12, 2010	Board of Trustees reaffirms its November 11 action and requests progress reports from administration.
Feb 16, 2010	University-wide faculty meeting hears report on issue from biology department chair Jim Wilson. He spoke about the controversy and the manner in which he and his faculty colleagues are approaching this issue in their classrooms.
Feb 17, 2010	Wisbey speaks to North American Division Conference presidents during annual meeting at Cohutta Springs. Formal presentation was 90 minutes, followed by 90 minutes of additional exchanges following formal close of meeting.
Mar 16, 2010	Annual meeting of Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities at Loma Linda University. Group votes to appoint ad-hoc committee to encourage faith-based methodologies in teaching science on Adventist campuses.
Mar 25, 2010	During the annual meeting of the North American Division Campus Chaplains Council meeting, the group votes confidence in the leadership of La Sierra, and calls for differences among fellow believers to be addressed in love.

Mar 31, 2010	<i>Adventist Review</i> publishes "Evolution Controversy Stirs La Sierra Campus" <a href="http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=3227">http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=3227</a>
April 1, 2010	LSU responds to the <i>Adventist Review</i> <a href="http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=2784">http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=2784</a>
April 1, 2010	Wisbey reports to campus regarding the <i>Adventist Review</i> article and LSU's response.
May 6, 2010	Wisbey sends letter to editor of <i>Adventist Review</i> . Letter posted later that day on AR Website.
May 12, 2010	LSU biennial Constituency Meeting. Vigorous discussion by delegates regarding creation-evolution. General Conference VP Ella Simmons and General Conference and North American Offices of Education representatives Garlan Dulan & Larry Blackmer participate.
May 25, 2010	Michigan Conference Executive Committee votes withdrawal of education subsidy benefit to employees wishing to send their children to La Sierra University as noted in the Michigan Memo. <a href="http://www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/05/26/citing_apostasy_michigan_confere_nce_removes_la_sierra_university_employee_subsidy">http://www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/05/26/citing_apostasy_michigan_confere_nce_removes_la_sierra_university_employee_subsidy</a>
May 27, 2010	"La Sierra Loved Me (Testify)" Facebook page launched by several La Sierra alumni. Page currently has nearly 700 followers, and well over 150 posts from alumni and current students about how they value the university and their experiences here. <a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/La-Sierra-Loved-Me-Testify/114384395270826">http://www.facebook.com/pages/La-Sierra-Loved-Me-Testify/114384395270826</a>
May 28, 2010	President Wisbey responds to the Michigan Conference Executive Committee. <a href="http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=3183">http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=3183</a>
June 8, 2010	Provost-elect meets with Biology faculty.
June 8, 2010	Membership and specific charge of <i>ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group is developed in consultation with university president, provost, and provost-elect
June 16, 2010	Board of Trustees establishes <i>ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group
June 21, 2010	Biology Department & provost-elect produce statement for use at General Conference Session (June 23 – July 4, 2010) English: <a href="http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=3256">http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=3256</a> Spanish: <a href="http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=3257">http://www.lasierra.edu/index.php?id=3257</a>
June 23, 2010	Central California Conference Executive Committee votes to ask for report from LSU Board regarding efforts being made towards a "satisfactory outcome."
June 29, 2010	Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) sends letter to Wisbey informing him that University's accreditation has been reaffirmed for eight years, and noting a special visit will occur in Spring 2011 to review the issues of institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and faculty control of curriculum as related to the biology department.
July 1, 2010	Board Chair Graham publishes "Why I Support La Sierra University" as union president's editorial in the <i>Pacific Union Recorder</i> . <a href="http://www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/06/27/ricardo_graham_why_i_support_la_sierra_university">http://www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/06/27/ricardo_graham_why_i_support_la_sierra_university</a>

July 29, 2010	Board of Trustees Creation-Evolution Study Group meets in Glendale to follow-up on committee work that has occurred online.
Aug 10, 2010	The provost, in consultation with the Creation-Evolution Study Group, the Biology Department and individuals external to the campus, completes development of student survey in order for the Board of Trustees Creation-Evolution Study Group to have some objective information regarding what is occurring in biology courses.
Aug 20, 2010	Spectrum and EducateTruth websites post articles commenting on LSU and WASC accreditation. Spectrum: <a href="http://www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/08/20/accrediting_body_reaffirms_la_sierra_university_special_attention_science_education">http://www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/08/20/accrediting_body_reaffirms_la_sierra_university_special_attention_science_education</a> EducateTruth: <a href="http://www.educatetruth.com/la-sierra-evidence/wasc-considers-outside-efforts-threatening-to-lsus-autonomy/">http://www.educatetruth.com/la-sierra-evidence/wasc-considers-outside-efforts-threatening-to-lsus-autonomy/</a>
August 24, 2010	Board Chair Graham provides a progress report from the Creation-Evolution Study Group to the Board of Trustees.
August 26, 2010	At the request of LSU's Board Chair Graham, President Wisbey, and Provost Pawluk travel to the General Conference Office to meet with President Wilson, President Jackson, and other church leaders.
August 30 – Sept 17, 2010	Biology survey was administered via Zoomerang.com.
Sept 1, 2010	Comment by Pitman following a posting on EducateTruth regarding its Purpose and Goals." <a href="http://www.educatetruth.com/la-sierra-evidence/educate-truths-purpose-and-goals/">http://www.educatetruth.com/la-sierra-evidence/educate-truths-purpose-and-goals/</a> "[W]e need more students or other source of direct information on the LSU campus. We have some ideas and some new sources of on-campus information, but any other ideas in this regard would be helpful as we attempt to trace the corrective or non-corrective actions of LSU over time..." Sean Pitman <a href="http://www.DetectingDesign.com">http://www.DetectingDesign.com</a> (Quote)
Sept 7, 2010	Biology survey is posted on EducateTruth.com. <a href="http://www.educatetruth.com/la-sierra-evidence/l-su-surveys-students/">http://www.educatetruth.com/la-sierra-evidence/l-su-surveys-students/</a>
Sept 19 – 21, 2010	<i>Ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group gives a preliminary progress report to the Board of Trustees at its retreat.
September 21 – October 27, 2010	Results of the biology survey are analyzed by the Office of the Provost as well as by the <i>ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group with input from Biology Department faculty members
November 2 & 10, 2010	<i>Ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group meets to determine an appropriate recommendation to offer to the Board of Trustees. Conclusions and recommendations are incorporated into a Powerpoint of the survey results and printed text of conclusions and recommendations distributed to the board of trustees.
November 11, 2010	Board of Trustees, having gone into executive session, considers the results of the <i>ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group's research. Takes an interim action in executive session. Upon request for clarification, provost is informed that he may not advise biology faculty of the action taken in executive session, but that the board wishes to receive the AAA site visit report prior to making a final and public statement.

Nov 15 – 19, 2010	Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) site visit. Many questions are focused on the creation-evolution question.
Nov 19, 2010	NAD Director of Education gives President Wisbey a “consulting letter,” addressed to university administration and the board, written on behalf of the site visit team by Larry Blackmer, Lisa Beardsley, and David Steen.
Dec 7, 2010	President Wisbey, Provost Pawluk, and CFO David Geriguis meet in Thousand Oaks with Board Chair Ricardo Graham and Vice Chair Judy St. John to discuss the AAA draft report and the consulting letter.
Jan 11, 2011	<i>Ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group meets in Glendale to review the “consulting letter,” and portions of the initial draft of the AAA site visit report. Committee chair, Larry Caviness, along with committee members Judy St. John and Meredith Jobe are commissioned to draft the committee’s report to the board.
Jan 12, 2011	Provost & LSU biologists, in an attempt to seek productive solutions to the teaching of evolution and creation, request visits by pairs of the LSU biologists to the biology departments at sister institutions – Andrews University, Pacific Union College, Southern Adventist University, and Walla Walla University. (Initial response from the four institutions is positive, but then reluctance to set up the visits is expressed. LSU is considering alternative ways to foster collegial and productive discussions among colleagues.)
Feb 1, 2011	President Wisbey receives the “final draft” of the AAA visiting team’s report. The report is expected to be voted by the AAA Board on April 4, 2011.
Feb 7, 2011	“Final draft” of the AAA Report is forwarded to the <i>ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Committee for review.
Feb 9 & 10, 2011	Board of Trustees meets. Reviews and approves final report and recommendations from <i>ad hoc</i> Creation-Evolution Study Group in open board session. Board of Trustees also votes the following action: “to request that President Wisbey make a request to the Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities with a message that La Sierra University is earnestly seeking information on how to deal with the creation evolution issue, and to suggest that they build a survey tool that can be administered to all North American Division SDA higher education institutions and that the comparative data be made available to each institution.”
Feb 21, 2011	Focused report, preliminary to the Special Visit, due at WASC.
April 18 - 20, 2011	WASC Special Visit is scheduled.
April 2011	AAA will meet to review visiting team report and make a final decision on La Sierra’s term of accreditation.
December 31, 2012	AAA’s visiting team recommends that AAA schedule an “interim visit” to LSU before December 31, 2012, with LSU to prepare a written progress report in preparation for the visit addressing implementation of the major recommendations from AAA’s report.

## Attachment 2

(This interim report is attached to, and superseded by, the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee to the Board.)

**Summary of Findings  
of the  
*ad hoc* Creation-Evolution Study Group  
An Interim Report  
Voted in Executive Session  
La Sierra University Board of Trustees  
11 Nov 2010**

The *ad hoc* committee finds that La Sierra University biologists:

1. Teach science in an objective manner.
2. Respect students' opinions and beliefs.
3. Support students' religious affiliations.
4. Mentor students and encourage their personal faith.
5. Help students understand the difference between what they know and what they believe.
6. Help students integrate faith and learning.
7. Seriously discuss complex and difficult issues with their students.

In conclusion, the survey indicates that, while the Biology Department generally supports and respects the faith of students, and explains the strengths and weaknesses of evolution, the department must make a greater effort to present and support the denominational view of creation.

The issue of evolution and origins only takes up about two weeks of the curriculum in General Biology, which is taken by about four percent of La Sierra's students during any given year. This provides an important perspective regarding the issue.

The committee believes it should continue with the plan, voted in September, for the committee to convene following the release of the AAA visitation report. The committee does not believe it is qualified to evaluate the biology curriculum, and the AAA visit provides an opportunity to get an independent perspective from individuals with more expertise in this area.

**Attachment 3**  
**Survey Results**

**[see attached pages]**

# La Sierra University Biology Survey (Summer 2010)

## Results Overview



Date: 2/7/2011 10:16 AM PST  
 Responses: Completes  
 Filter: No filter applied

Our biology faculty members of La Sierra University want to teach complex issues effectively. In light of concerns recently raised about the ways in which creation and evolution are being taught in La Sierra University's biology classes, academic administration and the faculty of the Department of Biology want to determine, in an objective manner, what our students are being taught on this subject. Therefore, because you have been a student in our biology program, you are being asked to respond to this brief survey. We are interested in hearing what you, personally, experienced while studying biology at La Sierra University. We appreciate your honest responses. Thank you for taking a few moments to respond to these 17 brief survey items. Your responses will be kept completely confidential.


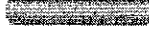



### 1. It is appropriate to present evolutionary theories in biology classes at La Sierra University.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		64	70%
<b>4</b> Agree		20	22%
<b>3</b> Neutral		3	3%
<b>2</b> Disagree		4	4%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		0	0%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>




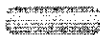


### 2. Evolution is presented as a scientific working theory in biology classes.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		52	57%
<b>4</b> Agree		25	27%
<b>3</b> Neutral		4	4%
<b>2</b> Disagree		4	4%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		6	7%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>



**3.** The differences between theories, facts, and beliefs were explained in my biology classes.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		51	56%
<b>4</b> Agree		18	20%
<b>3</b> Neutral		6	7%
<b>2</b> Disagree		9	10%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		7	8%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>

**4.** The changing and always tentative nature of even strongly-established theories was explained in my biology classes.







<b>5</b> Strongly agree		46	51%
<b>4</b> Agree		21	23%
<b>3</b> Neutral		6	7%
<b>2</b> Disagree		11	12%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		4	4%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		3	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>

**5.** Data relevant to testing the strengths and weaknesses of evolutionary theories were discussed in my biology classes.







<b>5</b> Strongly agree		34	37%
<b>4</b> Agree		24	26%
<b>3</b> Neutral		10	11%
<b>2</b> Disagree		14	15%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		7	8%

<b>0</b>	No basis for response		2	2%
<b>Total</b>			<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>


**6.** Evolutionary theories were taught as the factual explanation of the origin of life.

<b>5</b>	Strongly agree		20	22%
<b>4</b>	Agree		12	13%
<b>3</b>	Neutral		13	14%
<b>2</b>	Disagree		20	22%
<b>1</b>	Strongly disagree		25	27%
<b>0</b>	No basis for response		1	1%
<b>Total</b>			<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>

**7.** My professors presented helpful ways of relating science and religious faith.

<b>5</b>	Strongly agree		36	40%
<b>4</b>	Agree		26	29%
<b>3</b>	Neutral		11	12%
<b>2</b>	Disagree		6	7%
<b>1</b>	Strongly disagree		10	11%
<b>0</b>	No basis for response		2	2%
<b>Total</b>			<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>

**8.** The Seventh-day Adventist view of creation was presented in biology classes.

<b>5</b>	Strongly agree		21	23%
<b>4</b>	Agree		25	27%
<b>3</b>	Neutral		10	11%
<b>2</b>	Disagree		19	21%

<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		11	12%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		5	5%
<b>Total</b>		91	100%

**9.** The Seventh-day Adventist view of creation was supported in biology classes.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		13	14%
<b>4</b> Agree		24	26%
<b>3</b> Neutral		23	25%
<b>2</b> Disagree		9	10%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		16	18%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		6	7%
<b>Total</b>		91	100%

Based on what I learned in biology classes at La Sierra University, I believe that:

**10.** Science is an effective, but tentative, way to understand and explain natural processes.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		44	48%
<b>4</b> Agree		32	35%
<b>3</b> Neutral		7	8%
<b>2</b> Disagree		4	4%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		4	4%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		0	0%
<b>Total</b>		91	100%

**11.** Science offers an effective way to prove beliefs about God and God's creation.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		30	33%
<b>4</b> Agree		17	19%
<b>3</b> Neutral		19	21%
<b>2</b> Disagree		10	11%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		12	13%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		3	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>







**12.** Science and religion are valid but different ways of understanding the world.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		39	43%
<b>4</b> Agree		22	24%
<b>3</b> Neutral		12	13%
<b>2</b> Disagree		11	12%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		6	7%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		1	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>







**13.** Science is unable to definitively answer questions about the ultimate origins of human life.

<b>5</b> Strongly agree		21	23%
<b>4</b> Agree		31	34%
<b>3</b> Neutral		18	20%
<b>2</b> Disagree		11	12%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		6	7%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		4	4%
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>







**14.** Biology professors treated my questions and views on issues of origins, science, and religious faith with dignity and respect.







<b>5</b> Strongly agree		51	56%
<b>4</b> Agree		14	15%
<b>3</b> Neutral		9	10%
<b>2</b> Disagree		7	8%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		2	2%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		8	9%
<b>Total</b>		91	100%

**15.** Biology professors encouraged my faith in a personal God.










<b>5</b> Strongly agree		42	46%
<b>4</b> Agree		21	23%
<b>3</b> Neutral		7	8%
<b>2</b> Disagree		8	9%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		6	7%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		7	8%
<b>Total</b>		91	100%

**16.** Biology professors supported my faithfulness to my religious heritage.



<b>5</b> Strongly agree		46	51%
<b>4</b> Agree		16	18%
<b>3</b> Neutral		11	12%
<b>2</b> Disagree		7	8%
<b>1</b> Strongly disagree		4	4%
<b>0</b> No basis for response		7	8%

		Total	91	100%
<b>17.</b> I would encourage others to study biology at La Sierra University.				
<b>5</b>	Strongly agree		52	57%
<b>4</b>	Agree		15	16%
<b>3</b>	Neutral		6	7%
<b>2</b>	Disagree		5	5%
<b>1</b>	Strongly disagree		12	13%
<b>0</b>	No basis for response		1	1%
		Total	91	100%


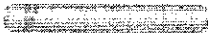
Please tell us a little about yourself so that we can classify your responses appropriately.

<b>18.</b> I am responding as a:				
	Graduating biology major 2010		11	12%
	Graduating biology major 2009		10	11%
	Graduating biology major 2008		5	5%
	Graduating biology major 2007		6	7%
	Graduating biology major 2000		1	1%
	Student who took General Biology in 2009-2010		47	52%
	Student who took General Biology in 2008-2009		6	7%
	Student who took General Biology in 2007-2008		2	2%
	Student who took General Biology in 2006-2007		3	3%
		Total	91	100%



**19.** I am a:

Female		46	51%
Male		45	49%
Total		91	100%

**20.** I belong to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

Yes		65	71%
No		26	29%
Total		91	100%

**21.** I:

Began as a freshman at La Sierra University		61	67%
Am/was a transfer student to La Sierra University		30	33%
Total		91	100%

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## Attachment 4

### Provost's Report on What We Have Done & What We Are Doing Regarding the Teaching of Creation & Evolution at LSU

1. Biology Department Statements:
  - Biology Department statement, affirming creation, prepared for General Conference Session and the university web site
  - A Student Learning Outcome (SLO) regarding the teaching of the SDA view(s) of creation was adopted and added to Biology Department SLOs
    - SLOs are evaluated by the department, and evaluations are reviewed by the University Assessment Committee, on a regular (but not annual) basis.
  
2. Refinement of Freshman Seminar (ongoing, based on student exit surveys)

For example, this year, Pastor Chris Oberg made the presentation entitled *Interpreting Scripture* and plans are being made to invite Jim Gibson to make a presentation during next year's seminar.
  
3. General Biology & Freshman Seminar faculty members updated on an ongoing basis.
  
4. Students discuss key documents related to SDA beliefs (Completed)
  - Genesis 1 & 2
  - Fundamental Belief #6
  - 2004 Annual Council *Reaffirmation of Creation*
  - Board of Trustees statement affirming creation
  
5. University science departments offer a lecture series intended to present a broad array of Seventh-day Adventist views regarding the integration of faith and science. Biology students receive credit for attending these lectures.
  
6. Review of syllabi and lectures by faculty members (Ongoing)
  
7. Recruit and hire a new biology faculty member (Beginning)

(Budgeting for this previously frozen position)
  
8. Plan to meet with S CA and SE CA Conference academy science teachers for professional/pedagogical discussions during the 2011-2012 academic year.
  
9. Faculty members of the Biology Department are attempting to schedule visits to sister IHEs in order to:

- Discover what/how they are teaching differently than, or the same as, we are.
- Discover any helpful differences in curriculum scope or sequence.
- Discover any helpful co-curricular activities being used.
- Converse collegially with other SDA biology professors.
- Return to LSU with practicable recommendations for improvement.

Tentative Plan:

Greer & Wilson to Andrews University

Grismer & Trueblood to Southern Adventist University

Dean & Bradley to Pacific Union College

Sabat & Joseph to Walla Walla University

Note: As of 07 Feb 2011, the four campuses have expressed reluctance about being involved in these visits.

10. Our biologists are planning to participate in GRI's *Conference on Teaching Origins* which will be held in the Banff area of Canada, July 29-31, 2011. Its purpose will be to discuss faith-affirming ways of thinking about and teaching topics that relate science and religion. A web page for the conference is being developed at --- <http://www.grisda.org/2011-banff/>