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FEATURE

AIIAS Goals and Corporate Identity Study

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***Abstract.** AIIAS exists to develop Christian leaders for service to the Church and society. As a faith-based educational institution its mission must reflect spiritual as well as academic concerns. Is AIIAS accomplishing that mission? This mixed methods study analyzed quantitative and qualitative data from a survey of 239 AIIAS students and alumni, including extension and online students. Responses showed that AIIAS is generally meeting its stated goals, but there is room for improvement and useful suggestions were offered. Interesting data patterns about concepts such as spirituality, institutional quality, and service also emerged.*

The mission of any faith-based educational institution is inherently interwoven with, and reflects, its spiritual concerns. The mission of AIIAS is to develop Christian leaders for service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and society. Within the Mission of AIIAS there are 7 goal statements, and 4 core value statements. In order to begin a dialog with stakeholders, a survey was developed, and electronically disseminated to all students and alumni from on campus, online, and extension campuses. The data were analyzed to determine if, and how, AIIAS was meeting its goal and core value statements. Quantitative and qualitative data suggest recommendations and implications for further study.

In the context of higher education today many challenges exist. Among these challenges are expanding content, new technologies, changing student demographics, concern about the increasing cost of higher education, and demands for greater accountability. As an institution demands greater accountability of itself and its participants, the community of necessity engages in identifying and responding to the challenge and complexity of change needed

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to meet the AIIAS mission and goals. Our response to these challenges will shape our role in Seventh-day Adventist higher education. The choice for AIIAS is simple: The whole educational community can pursue a course that engages the mission and goals of our institution to achieve acknowledged success or retreat to the margins of perceived mediocrity in the hope that we will avoid the inconvenience of evaluation, adaptation and renewal. A review of the results of this survey and its analysis, can begin to open a conversation regarding shared accountability to our mission and goals as seen through the eyes of our on-campus students, off-campus students, and alumni.

The results and accompanying analysis provide a clearer look at the challenges AIIAS needs to address in order to improve institutional effectiveness. This approach is preferable to the typical complaint that “the emphasis of the university is primarily on external perception of success and manipulation of image and only secondarily on improved institutional effectiveness” (Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin, 2001, p. 38).

While the data collected about AIIAS in this study demonstrate some challenges, it is recognized that all higher education institutions need to “become more responsive to the needs of the knowledge society. They need to increase their capacity and willingness to become engaged in the production of useful knowledge. And they need to develop their own specialized missions and profiles” (van Vught, 2008, “Higher Education System Diversity,” para. 5). Part of developing collaborative strategic plans includes outcomes that are observable and measureable regarding the AIIAS mission. The review and analysis of the data collected indicate that AIIAS is at times successful in meeting our stated goals, and at times it falls short.

Is AIIAS meeting the goal of being ‘Distinctively Adventist’? What does the data tell us about ‘Spirituality’? In the last fifteen years, researchers in the United States have found that there has been an

indirect and slow erosion of values education by the disengagement of private colleges and universities from their church affiliations. University mission statements that once included words like ‘values, morals, and congregational affiliations’ now give way to words like ‘independent, coeducational, and residential.’ (Burtchaell, as cited in Ferrari & Velcoff, 2005, p. 12)

In the end, however, it is students’ lives that matter. If the changes are not seen there, they do not exist. The mission statement is a starting point, but that mission needs to be kept in the day-to-day activities of a school.

We define institutional values within higher education settings as goals and outcomes, as well as procedural operations, which are actualized to students and staff reflecting the identifiable benchmarks of the organization.

Institutional values are conveyed through administrative operations, academic programs and policies, and student services. Furthermore, institutional values should be related to the common mission and expressed in the mission statement of the college and university. (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004, p. 45)

Is AIIAS keeping its promises to its students? It is with this question in mind that we have collected and analyzed our student data.

Study Design

This study was designed to assess the extent to which AIIAS is fulfilling its stated goals in the experience and lives of its students and alumni. The main research questions ask whether or not, and to what extent, AIIAS is meeting its goals, how students have been most affected by their time studying at AIIAS, the quality of their experience at AIIAS, and whether these outcomes have changed over time.

Whatever impact and contribution AIIAS might hope to make, the extent to which AIIAS fulfills its mission will be realized through and reflected in the experience of the students who pass through this institution. In other words, the mission and goals of AIIAS, no matter how grand and lofty, are only as good as the social, spiritual and academic experience of individual students on this campus. For that reason, this survey was conducted only among AIIAS students and alumni. Their perspective enables them to assess the consistency between the mission and goals of the institution and how they are operationalized through its programs and support structures. There are many other valid perspectives, but students and alumni are uniquely qualified to evaluate the extent to which AIIAS has fulfilled its mission to equip them, academically and spiritually, for service and leadership.

While endeavoring to seek candid, honest and forthright responses that would provide a basis for planning changes and improvements, every precaution was taken to preserve the anonymity of both the respondents and AIIAS personnel. The instrument used consisted of an online survey sent to current students and alumni of AIIAS. The survey was based on the AIIAS goals and values statements (as published in the AIIAS Bulletin), with a few additional recruiting questions, and demographics including school, program, English Center attendance, modality, and years attended. Likert-scale responses ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The survey focused on the spiritual atmosphere on campus, financial issues, quality of instruction and personnel issues, relationships, adequacy of facilities, alumni concerns, and other related topics. Open-ended questions were strategically placed to allow for additional comment.

Results

The responses to the surveys came from on campus, extension program, and online students, as well as alumni. While the survey was sent to everyone on the AIIAS student and alumni lists, the extension programs and online alumni were the least represented (see Table 1) among the respondents. Nearly half the current student body participated, which is an excellent response rate for an online survey—compare this to 20% from one college student survey done elsewhere, for example (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004). Nearly half of the current online students also participated. Alumni and extension program numbers were much lower, as might be expected from other similar studies (see People Pulse, 2010). Consistent with the status of AIIAS as an international campus, all 13 World Divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were represented in the survey (see Table 2). Northern and Southern Asia-Pacific Divisions had the highest representation, which mirrors the student population.

Some items on the survey were directed toward all students and alumni, while others could only be answered by those who had lived on campus. For this reason the sample size varies, based on which groups were asked those specific questions. This analysis also uses data from partially completed surveys, as long as the entire scale was completed. For these reasons, the number of respondents varies over different scales.

Table 1
Survey Participants

	On campus	Extension	Online	Total
Current students	101	27	20	148
Alumni	69	6	2	77
Total	170	33	22	225

Table 2
Survey Participants by Division

Division	Current students	Alumni	Totals
SSD	67	31	98
SUD	9	1	10
SPD	7	0	7
NSD	19	15	34
ESD	2	1	3
WAD	5	2	7
TED	3	1	4
SID	1	4	5
EUD	1	1	2
ECD	8	7	15
SAD	4	0	4
NAD	12	8	20
IAD	6	5	11
Total	144	76	220

The initial question that motivated this study was to find out whether, based on their personal experience, students feel that AIIAS is meeting its goals. Since the questionnaire was designed based on the goals statements, the preliminary analysis (see Table 3) shows the number of items and reliability for each scale, as well as the means for each category of the AIIAS goals statements. From the simple analysis in Table 3, it is clear that AIIAS is meeting its goals, since the responses to the items correspond to a 4 on the Likert scale, or “agree.” None of the scales averaged above a score of 4, however, and some were decidedly lower. This suggests that there is room for improvement, and that the results should be looked at in greater detail.

In carrying out the analysis, it became clear that AIIAS goals and values statements did not provide the best structure to explain the data collected in this study. Many concepts were mentioned in more than one place, while others, such as whether AIIAS is achieving appropriate accreditation and accountability, were not really appropriate for students to judge. For that reason, scales were developed based on the data, which could give a clearer picture of the students’ perspective of their AIIAS experience. These revised scales were used for the rest of the analysis in this study.

Table 3
Is AIIAS Meeting its Goals?

Goal	n	Items	Mean	SD	Reliability
Distinctively Adventist	209	5	3.78	.57	.645
Academic excellence	211	7	3.96	.52	.808
Recognition		Administrative questions (not relevant to students)*			
Service to students and community	161	6	3.79	.59	.785
Essential supporting resources	62	13	3.56	.54	.878
Accountability	204	2	3.96	.57	.670
Successful graduates	202	6	3.97	.52	.735

*Students were asked about the recognition of their own degree, but were not asked about administrative issues relating to AIIAS accreditation.

Figure 1 shows the scales that were used in this study. All the scales used had acceptable reliability scores, with Cronbach's alpha numbers ranging from .693 to .904. The foundational descriptive scales are represented by the horizontal bars below. These are the core aspects of graduate education, similar to those that accreditors typically evaluate during the accreditation process (see for example Philippine Accrediting Association, 2008). Given the spiritual focus of AIIAS as an Adventist graduate school, spirituality is included as an additional dimension to physical resources, personnel, and curriculum, as major areas of importance. The transversal scales show a slightly different perspective. These concepts cut across areas by nature, and draw questions from the areas indicated by the placement of the ovals, as well as some questions that are specific to that area. The English Center questions discuss personnel and curriculum issues relating to the English Center, but these questions did not include the personnel and curriculum questions applicable to AIIAS as a whole.

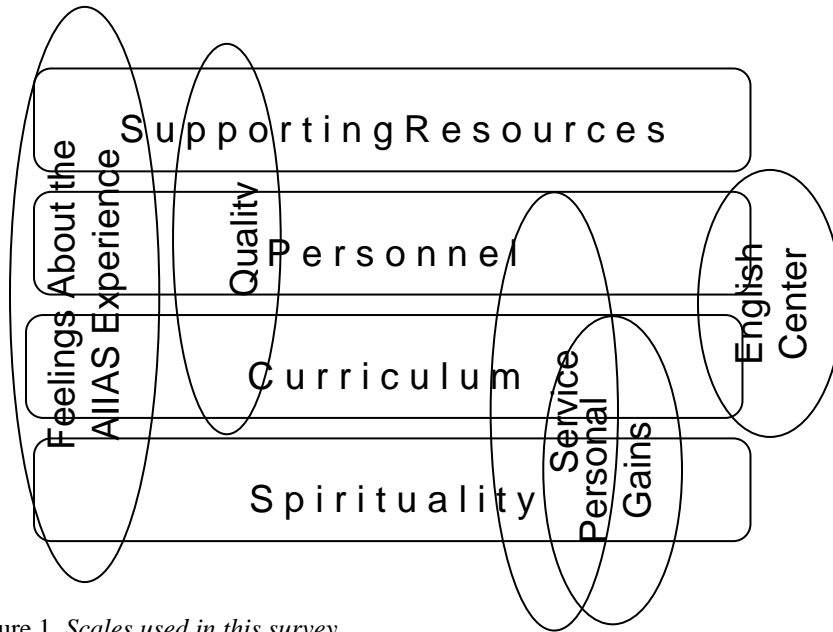


Figure 1. Scales used in this survey.

Spirituality

The survey questions relating to spirituality yielded interesting results (see Table 4). The mean scores all corresponded to a score of 4, or “agree,” which suggests that, in general, spirituality is not a huge problem at AIIAS. The highest item on the scale attests to at least moderate success in the area of integration of faith and learning, with students agreeing (3.99) that their time at AIIAS has strengthened their faith in God. The lowest score is somewhat of a concern, as it suggests that respondents, while growing in their faith, are not growing equally in their behavior. This is the specific subject of Garber’s (1996) book, in which he claims that what is needed is for students to develop “a vision of integrity which coherently connects belief to behavior” (p. 20). In this case, because of reverse coding, the lifestyle question (see Table 4) means that respondents “agree” that their lifestyle is not less Adventist than it was before studying at AIIAS. Thus, while it is clear that this is an area that could be improved (mean of 3.67), and while it was the lowest on the spirituality scale, it still suggests that lifestyle is not entirely out of line with belief.

Table 4
Spirituality Scale

n = 202	Cronbach's alpha = .734	Mean	SD
1. My degree at AIIAS (has) strengthened my faith in God.		3.99	.79
2. My own standards of integrity (have) increased during my time at AIIAS.		3.98	.77
3. At AIIAS, faith is well integrated with scholarship.		3.95	.76
4. The atmosphere on the AIIAS campus nurtures/nurtured my faith.**		3.91	.72
5. I am more dedicated to the mission of the Adventist Church now than I was before studying at AIIAS.		3.74	1.03
6. My lifestyle is less "Adventist" than it was before studying at AIIAS.*		3.67	1.04
Total		3.87	.56

** For students who studied on campus only.

* Reverse coded.

There were no significant differences in spirituality based on the field of study or level of study (MA vs. PhD). Similarly, the study found no significant differences in overall spirituality based on modality of study (on-campus, online, extension). However, campus numbers were slightly higher than online totals which, in turn, were higher than extension campuses. Since the numbers of extension and online students were low, however, this did not reach significance.

The length of time a person remained on campus, however, was significantly differentiated with increased spirituality (see Table 5), in a particular U-shaped pattern that is repeated over many of the scales. There is a low point that occurs when a student has been studying at AIIAS from 6-12 months. Students who had been on campus from 6-12 months scored significantly lower ($p < .05$) on the spirituality scale than students who had been at AIIAS for more time or less time, yet the difference was small. This pattern is observed in multiple areas in this study, and may merit further research; it seems there is a definite low point during the second half of the first year of study in a program.

Table 5
Spirituality and Duration of Study at AIIAS

Duration	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
< 6 months	31	3.87	.49	3.00	5.00
6-12 months	26	3.52*	.50	2.50	4.83
1-3 yrs	46	4.01	.55	2.33	5.00
More than 3 yrs	31	3.98	.57	3.17	5.00
Total	134	3.87	.56	2.33	5.00

* Statistically significant difference with all other durations of study at AIIAS ($p < .05$)

Perception of spirituality was statistically significantly higher ($p = .02$) for married students ($M = 3.93$) than for singles ($M = 3.73$). It was also significantly higher ($p = .001$) for those who said they would recommend AIIAS to others ($M = 3.93$) than for those who were not sure, or said they would not recommend it ($M = 3.60$).

The qualitative data shed some light on these quantitative results in the area of spirituality. Many students commented on the spiritual aspects of the AIIAS campus, most of which were positive. Typical comments showed appreciation for the combination of “academic excellence and being abreast with the modern trends of the times yet retaining the Christian spirituality that every student needs.” Respondents also suggested that AIIAS offered “support for their real lives and also spiritual development.” Some students also pointed out that AIIAS was a “great place to broaden the horizon of mission,” and that the educational focus was “mission oriented.”

Some students felt that “we are not utilizing our human resources/capital enough to bless the communities and the churches around us.” Suggestions for improving the spiritual atmosphere on campus included getting students more involved in preaching on Sabbaths, supporting churches in the area, having yearly AIIAS-sponsored evangelistic campaigns, and improving chapel attendance by both students and faculty. One suggestion for service was that AIIAS “should mentor the sister institutions within this Division.” Some students found the church services a bit too formal and felt the sermons were not always deeply spiritual. A small percentage found that their spirituality did not grow during their time at AIIAS, with one suggesting that spirituality was actually divorced from classroom activities. So, while spirituality is an area that seems to be an overall strength at AIIAS, there were certainly areas that need

improvement. There is also need to be constantly seeking ways to better integrate faith and learning, and to share knowledge with the surrounding community.

Curriculum/Educational Concerns

Students had interesting comments about the curriculum. Overall, they were generally pleased, with the average response score for the scale being 3.92, or equivalent to “agree” (see Table 6). The overall data showed interesting patterns, with the top items relating to the excellence in their field of study, and in their ability to write and do research. The lowest item related to the ability to apply what was learned in one’s home context, yet the scale score (3.54) indicates agreement that it would not be difficult. AIIAS lecturers need to consistently review course content to ensure that it is both relevant and applicable. Cultural impediments to the applications of professional knowledge and practice need to be openly discussed.

As with the area of spirituality, the same U-shaped reaction occurred with the educational programs. Students who had been at AIIAS less than 6 months or more than a year were significantly more positive about the educational programs than those who had been at AIIAS from 6-12 months ($p < .05$). There were no differences in satisfaction with the curriculum by gender, marital status, or location of study.

The qualitative data showed mixed responses to the educational programs at AIIAS. Respondents praised the “balanced education” and the “courses offered in research areas,” and one called it “an ideal institution.” A few lamented the “time to degree completion” of their program, saying that “it takes too long to complete a thesis.” Most, however, suggested that AIIAS was “friendly, academic,” and “a good study environment.”

When given open-ended space to speak freely about AIIAS, many made educational suggestions. They wished for “closer collaboration between the schools: they are too [far] apart. For example, why not make some theology courses compulsory for the Graduate School and vice versa for better interaction?” They also suggested to “make the students more productive. For example, PhD Theology students may be asked to produce a commentary or any useful literary work as part of their requirements in replacement of the comprehensive, for example.” Others asked for the comprehensive to be “less threatening,” and to “avoid too many class requirements for any course.”

Table 6
Curriculum

n = 202	Cronbach's alpha = .855	Mean	SD
1. I feel that my degree at AIIAS will prepare/has prepared me to be an excellent professional in my field.		4.16	.78
2. I am developing/developed the ability to do quality research and writing while studying at AIIAS.		4.11	.74
3. Degree content taught at AIIAS is useful in the real world.		4.05	.68
4. The degree requirements at AIIAS are/were worthwhile activities.		4.00	.62
5. AIIAS programs are of high academic quality.		3.98	.78
6. I am developing/developed time and resource management skills as part of my degree at AIIAS.		3.93	.69
7. AIIAS programs address current issues of concern within the Adventist Church.		3.83	.75
8. AIIAS programs address crucial issues of concern in the world today.		3.72	.82
9. The international training I receive(ed) at AIIAS will be/is difficult to apply in my home context.*		3.54	.94
	Total	3.92	.52

*Reverse coded

Personnel

The faculty and staff of an institution make it what it is; without them, it is nothing but a collection of buildings and ideals. The question, of course, is whether the personnel of the institution live out the institutional goals in their daily lives, or whether their allegiance is merely theoretical. Respondents were again quite positive overall about AIIAS personnel (see Table 7), with helpfulness and professional ability being the areas that scored the highest. Administration's sensitivity to the needs of students scored significantly lower ($p < .05$) than the other items on the scale, but still achieved the rank of "agree."

Again, differences in perceptions of AIIAS personnel were found based on demographics. Tukey posthoc tests showed that those who had been at AIIAS from 6-12 months had a significantly lower ($p = .00$) perception of the personnel

($M = 3.55$) than those who had been on campus for more time or less time (see Table 8) but answers still fell within the same “Agree” category. Interestingly, this suggests that while students’ initial perceptions of AIIAS personnel are high, they fall significantly as they get better acquainted, and then continue to improve over time, though never quite reaching the initial level. The only other significant difference in perceptions of personnel is one that is worth noting: those who said they were not sure, or would not recommend AIIAS to others scored the personnel significantly lower ($M = 3.55$) than those who felt comfortable recommending the institution to others ($M = 3.95$). Clearly, the people and the institution are seen as one and the same.

Table 7
Personnel

n = 202	Cronbach’s alpha = .869	Mean	SD
1. AIIAS teaching faculty are helpful to students.		4.19	.65
2. AIIAS support staff are/were helpful.		4.01	.71
3. AIIAS teaching faculty are outstanding professionals.		3.96	.76
4. AIIAS support staff are/were highly qualified in their area.		3.89	.71
5. AIIAS faculty are/were current/up to date in their field.		3.88	.73
6. I have seen many examples of true servant leadership at AIIAS.		3.76	.86
7. Faculty were/are readily accessible when I needed them.		3.73	.81
8. AIIAS administration is/was sensitive to student needs.		3.59	.98
	Total	3.88	.56

Table 8
Perceptions of Personnel and Duration of Study at AIIAS

Duration	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
< 6 months	31	4.18	.46	3.25	5.00
6-12 months	26	3.56*	.52	2.50	4.25
1-3 yrs	46	3.89	.45	3.00	4.88
More than 3 yrs	31	3.95	.54	2.75	5.00
Total	134	3.90	.52	2.50	5.00

* Statistically significant differences with all other durations of study at AIIAS ($p < .05$)

The respondents were not directly asked about their teachers or the administration in the qualitative questions, but these topics came up frequently. Many were thankful for “godly and competent teachers and administrators,” and they felt that it was really the personnel who make AIIAS what it is. Campus relationships were described as an “intimate group of students and faculty, quality faculty,” and an “exceptional cross-cultural experience.”

Respondents clearly felt that “leaders and administrators should set good examples to the people around them,” but it was clear that this was not always the case. The few negative comments suggest specific areas that could be improved. “Some faculty are not helpful and very few faculty are servant leaders, rather most of them are bureaucratic leaders, some of them are autocratic leaders.” There were varying opinions on this point, with one respondent concluding that “while most of the professors exhibited servant leadership, there were others who seemed proud and boastful about their own accomplishments. This minority also openly criticized those they perceived to be incapable of achieving much,” and one respondent even suggested that some faculty had “racist tendencies,” or were insensitive to students from developing countries. These comments were the exception, however. More common was the attitude of one student, who said he was “particularly pleased with the level of guidance given as I prepared for my thesis. I am eternally grateful to those who worked with me; they were always available.”

The staff did not escape similar concerns. “Some staff in administration are so rude and complicated to approach.” This respondent added the hope that the administration would be “sensitive about it.” One respondent said, “I have met a couple of disrespectful administrators just because I was not able to pay my tuition.” Another suggested that administrators needed to listen more effectively. “When they are approached by students, they [are] too defensive and, as a result, student issues are not addressed properly.”

One student expressed a concern about timely communication, and suggested that this concern was also shared by others she had communicated with.

I love AIIAS, and I am grateful for their classes. But one very big problem is communication. Everyone (with the exception of the Online staff) is very, very, very slow at responding to e-mails, and . . . [this] can be very frustrating! [Sometimes] . . . it has taken up to 2 or 3 months to get back to me. I think AIIAS needs to . . . be more effective with e-mail communication! But, having said this, AIIAS is still a wonderful institution to study at, and I will still recommend it to others!

It is clear that this is an area that needs improvement.

A few students also had concerns about faculty quality, and ideas about how teaching should be done. One suggested that the “learning environment is great but sometimes professors are not that good!” They asked that holidays not be used as a time to assign additional homework, and also asked teachers to take note that “in graduate studies, students are not supposed to memorize facts and figures. Higher thinking skills should be involved in class activities and assessments.” They suggested that faculty “use more journal articles in their courses, explaining the structure, methodology and how to evaluate these articles.” They also suggested that “there is a need for less content and the development of more academic competencies in the students.”

Many of the concerns mentioning administration were actually on issues relating to teaching personnel. Respondents asked the administration to find ways to keep teachers at AIIAS for longer periods of time “so that heavy rotation [high turnover] could be somehow minimized.” Concerns were also raised about the change to semesters, which has delayed students from completing their programs, as well as the issue of professor absences, which might delay student completion of their research. One student wished to evaluate teachers at more than one point during the semester, and another suggested peer evaluation among faculty as a way to improve teaching skills.

Several comments were made about AIIAS and its relationship with organizations that sponsor students. AIIAS “should be proactive to rectify . . . issues with the . . . conferences so that the relationships between them are . . . maintained.” Another suggested that “AIIAS should work closely with SSD [the Southern Asia-Pacific Division] and its subsidiaries.” Specific concerns were raised about the loss of “potential students from Korea and Indonesia,” and the perception that nothing had been done about it.

Students asked for the faculty to be world class scholars “from across the 13 divisions of the world Church,” who “have a good command of English and more importantly, they should be known for publication.” They asked for full time AIIAS faculty to teach them, not adjuncts, and for more full professors, not so “many assistant and associate professors.” Some even perceived AIIAS faculty as being “rejects” from other institutions. One described it as a “perceived lack of renowned lecturers.” Some suggested that AIIAS needs “more international teachers who integrate faith across the curriculum.”

The overall survey numbers, however, suggest general satisfaction with teaching faculty and administration. Many students took the time to say things like “just want to say thanks to all the faculty of AIIAS.” It is clear from the above comments, however, that there are specific places where improvement is needed. Some problems may be merely perception, but some are very real concerns, and, in any case, all the suggestions need to be considered carefully to see if anything can or should be done.

Supporting Resources

Good graduate education is not only about excellence in teaching, curriculum, and research. It also requires “a good library, well-equipped laboratories, and other tools to complement the faculty and the curriculum” (De Jong, 1990, p. 147). This section, *Supporting Resources*, discusses these factors. Given most of the items in the AIIAS goals statements refer mainly to on-campus resources, this scale was analyzed for on-campus students and alumni who studied on campus only. It is clear from looking at the items (see Table 9), that scholarships are an area that needs to be addressed. Both the amount of scholarships and the process of awarding scholarships garnered significantly lower ($p < .001$) scores than the other items in the scale. Students are unsure whether there are sufficient scholarships available ($M = 3.25$). This is an expected student assertion, since all would desire an award, and this score was significantly lower than even the question of how scholarships were awarded ($M = 3.55$).

Supporting resources were viewed differently by different groups. Master’s students ($M = 3.68$) scored campus resources significantly lower ($p < .001$) than did doctoral students ($M = 3.89$) but at the same categorical level. Students who had been on campus from 6-12 months ($M = 3.38$) rated the resources significantly lower than did all other groups ($M = 3.83$ - 3.97). Those who were not sure if they would recommend AIIAS to others ($M = 3.48$) had significantly lower scores on supporting resources than those who would recommend AIIAS ($M = 3.82$). There were no significant differences by gender or marital status, or between current students and alumni.

Table 9

Supporting Resources

n = 157	Cronbach’s alpha = .786	Mean	SD
1. The AIIAS Library meets graduate students' needs.		4.05	.80
2. AIIAS campus facilities contribute positively to the overall graduate experience.		4.05	.70
3. AIIAS support staff are/were highly qualified in their area.		3.86	.76
4. AIIAS scholarships are/were awarded fairly.		3.55	.88
5. Sufficient scholarship funds are/were available.		3.25	.85
	Total	3.75	.59

Qualitative responses discussed campus facilities and resources with surprising frequency. "It's a good experience, although there are some academic and facilities issues." This is probably the best way to summarize the comments made about the AIIAS facilities. Specific concerns include the noise in apartments that face the road, and finding a "solution for the stench that comes from across the campus" from "the dump area."

Other respondents suggested that AIIAS "provide air conditioners, ergonomic chairs, and LCD projectors for every class." Also suggested were improvements for the sports facilities, that "classrooms could be much better cleaned, painted and equipped," and that Internet access should be "more reliable and faster." One respondent suggested that AIIAS "develop a multi-media center."

The subject of financial resources drew mixed responses. Many respondents said that AIIAS was expensive, particularly "for self supporting students." There were also concerns for the costs of tuition for children in the elementary level, for the administration's way of withholding salary if there is a debit balance on an account, and for the donations that are so often solicited. Concerns were raised by online students as well. One respondent explained that there were "a few issues getting my payments through the system at the end, and frustrations with not getting timely responses and help from the treasurers. But for the rest AIIAS was really a great experience."

On the other side, there were as many positive comments about AIIAS having "reasonable costs, affordable, decent fees, cheap and still good education, offers a very quality education at a very reasonable cost." Part of this difference may have to do with whether a student is sponsored or not, and the cost of living of the country a student comes from. In any case, on average, there were more positive than negative comments about the finances, but it was clear that some students really struggle to make ends meet. There were no comments made relating to scholarships.

Feelings About the AIIAS Experience

The campus experience as a whole is important, not just the academic sphere. People respond to things holistically, and if one part is unsatisfactory, it does not matter if the rest of the aspects are acceptable; one still feels dissatisfied. The "Feelings about the AIIAS experience" scale (see Table 10) measures the overall feeling about one's time at AIIAS. It includes ideas of personnel being helpful, financial transactions reasonable, fairness, and friendliness. Because of the nature of this scale, several questions were limited to responses from students who had studied or were studying on campus. The question about AIIAS experience was rated on a 5-point scale from "very

negative” to “extremely positive.” Since the scale had a similar meaning, for analysis, it was compared with the other means as if it had been the same scale.

Not surprisingly, the number one answer about the AIIAS experience had to do with enjoying the multicultural atmosphere on campus. This response ($M = 4.37$) was significantly higher ($p = .004$) than any other response in the entire survey. This was followed by relationships with personnel and, again, not surprisingly, concerns about money issues were among the lowest scoring items. Overall, this scale has one of the highest means in the data set, following curriculum and faculty.

Table 10
Feelings About the AIIAS Experience

	On campus		Off campus	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. I enjoy(ed) living and interacting with other cultures on the AIIAS campus.*	4.37	.62	---	---
2. AIIAS teaching faculty are helpful to students	4.15	.66	4.33	.60
3. How do you feel about your AIIAS experience?	4.08	.72	4.23	.59
4. AIIAS support staff are/were helpful	3.98	.74	4.17	.60
5. The AIIAS community is friendly and supportive to families/singles.*	3.89	.90	---	---
6. Faculty were/are readily accessible when I needed them.	3.71	.83	3.81	.73
7. AIIAS programs address crucial issues of concern in the world today.	3.62	.84	4.06	.67
8. AIIAS scholarships are/were awarded fairly.*	3.55	.88	---	---
9. AIIAS administration is/was sensitive to student needs.	3.51	1.03	3.94	.73
10. Sufficient scholarship funds are/were available.*	3.25	.85	---	---
Total	3.84	.55	4.09	.41

Note. On campus $n = 157$, Cronbach's alpha = .862
Off campus, $n = 48$, Cronbach's alpha = .693

Responses about the AIIAS experience were significantly higher from those who had never lived on campus ($p = .007$). Married students were significantly more positive about their AIIAS experience than singles ($p = .048$). This difference is even more noticeable in campus students' perceptions of the friendliness of campus, where married students ($M = 4.05$) perceived AIIAS as significantly ($p = .004$) more friendly than singles did ($M = 3.65$). Those who would recommend AIIAS to others ($M = 3.98$) were significantly more positive about their experience ($p < .001$) than those who would not ($M = 3.54$); and those who had been at AIIAS from 6-12 months ($M = 3.59$) were significantly more negative than the other groups ($M = 3.90-4.19$; $p < .001$). There were no differences in feelings about the AIIAS experience based on area or degree studied.

The qualitative statements of AIIAS students and alumni were almost unanimously positive about their overall feelings about the AIIAS experience. Their comments ranged from it being a "great environment to study" in, to "the living standards are high," to comments about the way we "unite ourselves in one wonderful family," the "friendly environment," and of course, the "beautiful campus." Many suggested that they liked "the campus and the people there," and one explained that "here theory and practice of life perfectly coincide." In sum, as one put it, "my experience has been great."

Specific mention was repeatedly made of the "international flavor of education" at AIIAS, and that it is "known internationally." Respondents appreciated the "experience with foreigners, the diversity of cultures," and the "multicultural environment" that "contributes to one's global perspective." The single negative comment made was a suggestion that, given the differences in culture, women's dress should be more conservative, to avoid offending others from more conservative countries.

Socially, however, there were several suggestions made; mainly that "administration and professors need to improve their social interaction with students outside the classroom." Students specifically asked for "more interaction on a personal level among students, among faculty members and staff, and between faculty/administration and students and their families regardless of culture, professional rank, financial status, race or country of origin." One suggestion was that AIIAS personnel "pay random visits to students in their houses."

Academic Quality

Students decide to do graduate work for many reasons, but academic quality has to be among the most important. Quality is something that AIIAS has stressed since the beginning of its existence, but it is elusive to actually prove.

The data from this study (see Table 11) show an overall satisfaction with the academic quality at AIIAS ($M = 3.97$).

There were no differences in perceptions of academic quality by gender, however, married students had higher perceptions of academic quality than did singles ($p = .043$), and doctoral students scored quality higher than did master's students ($p = .013$). Those who were positive about recommending AIIAS to others ($M = 4.06$) had significantly higher perceptions ($p < .01$) of the academic quality at AIIAS than those who were not ($M = 3.57$), and students who had been on campus from 6-12 months had a significantly lower perception ($p < .01$) of quality ($M = 3.68$) than the other groups ($M = 4.03-4.13$), following the pattern we have seen. Students who had spent time in the English Center also gave significantly lower scores ($p < .05$) to academic quality ($M = 3.77$) than those who had not ($M = 4.02$). While all these comparisons were statistically significant, however, the differences between the means were not large.

Table 11

Academic Quality

n = 202	Cronbach's alpha = .868	Mean	SD
1. I feel that my degree at AIIAS will prepare/has prepared me to be an excellent professional in my field.		4.16	.78
2. The degree requirements at AIIAS are/were worthwhile activities.		4.00	.62
3. AIIAS teaching faculty are outstanding professionals.		3.96	.76
4. The AIIAS Library meets graduate students' needs.		3.99	.80
5. AIIAS programs are of high academic quality.		3.98	.78
6. AIIAS provides good value for the cost.		3.91	.86
7. AIIAS faculty are/were current/up to date in their field.		3.88	.73
8. AIIAS is well respected within the Adventist Church.		3.88	.84
Total		3.97	.56

While most of the qualitative comments about the academic quality at AIIAS were positive, there were a few concerns that need to be considered. One respondent was concerned that the word *Institute* might “not fully reflect the kind of graduate program AIIAS offers.” The suggestion was that this might give AIIAS a second class status, and that something should be done about it. A few respondents were concerned that the “quality of education is sometimes questionable due to unpreparedness and disorganization,” or that “allowing non-PhD holders to handle a class” might “compromise the quality of instruction.” Most of the comments, however, referred to “academic quality,” “quality Christian education,” the “good learning environment,” and that “the quality is good and it’s improving.” Many said they would recommend it to others “because AIIAS offers the best quality Christian education.”

Service

Christian higher education has particularly well-supported motives for service. It must not become “merely the avenue to success; it must be the gateway for responsibility . . . [and] commitment to civic responsibility. . . . It is not enough to achieve cultural literacy; we must engender social concern” (Long, as cited in Garber, 1996, p. 79). The service scale (see Table 12) looks at both examples of service among faculty and staff, and the student’s own feelings about serving others. The scale shows a spread of numbers, all of them equivalent to “agree.” It is clear that the responsibility for helping others has been developed and affirmed for the students who come to AIIAS. The two questions relating to their own responsibility for helping others ($M = 4.23; 4.22$; see Table 12) scored significantly higher ($p < .001$) than all the other items on the scale.

Scores on the service scale did not vary by gender or degree type. However, married students ($M = 3.99$) scored significantly higher than singles ($M = 3.78$; $p < .01$), and those who were not sure to recommend AIIAS to others ($M = 3.59$) scored significantly lower than those who would recommend it ($M = 3.4.00$; $p < .001$). Those who had been on campus 6-12 months ($M = 3.59$) also scored significantly lower on the service scale ($p < .001$), with even the students who had been on campus from 1-3 years ($M = 3.92$) scoring significantly lower than when they first arrived ($M = 4.22$; $p < .05$). Students who spent time in the English Center ($M = 3.69$) also scored significantly lower on the service scale than those who did not ($M = 3.99$; $p < .001$).

Table 12

Service

n = 202	Cronbach's alpha = .846	Mean	SD
1. I feel a responsibility to help my community, not only to develop my career.		4.23	.65
2. I feel a responsibility to help my church, not only to develop my career.		4.22	.71
3. AIIAS teaching faculty are helpful to students.		4.19	.65
4. AIIAS support staff are/were helpful.		4.01	.71
5. My time at AIIAS has made me more inclined than before to spend time serving others.		3.91	.78
6. I have seen many examples of true servant leadership at AIIAS.		3.76	.86
7. Faculty were/are readily accessible when I needed them.		3.73	.81
8. AIIAS mentors other Adventist institutions by serving as resource speakers, giving advice, support, etc.		3.71	.83
9. AIIAS administration is/was sensitive to student needs.		3.59	.98
	Total	3.93	.52

In the qualitative analysis, one student found the new Graduate School service learning requirement a burden, and felt that it would “deter students from studying at AIIAS.” The respondent suggested the service component “be greatly reduced to about 20 hours, and only [required] for those students who have no experience in doing service.” Most students who mentioned service opportunities at AIIAS, however, saw them as a positive reason for coming to this school. They talked about “opportunity for Christian service,” and that “the community experience was very positive, as well as the chance to do community work.”

Suggestions relating to opportunities for service included the idea of holding “seminars that would . . . open opportunities for students from other universities (particularly non-Adventists) to come to our campus and attend the seminars/trainings we hold.” Other ideas included being “in contact or serving the immediate community or the Church at large.”

Personal Gains

Graduate students come to AIIAS as adult professionals who bring many skills and a lot of experience. These things enrich the AIIAS environment, but were not acquired during their time on campus. Other skills, however, are polished, developed, or even introduced during a student's time at AIIAS. This scale is an attempt to identify the areas in which students have grown while at AIIAS. A low score does not necessarily mean a student is weak in that area; it may be that the student was already strong in that skill before coming to AIIAS. What this scale can provide is an overall picture of the type of growth AIIAS students are experiencing. Table 13 shows that personal gain figures were quite similar to the other scales in this data set. It might seem of some concern that the least gains were in the area of improved lifestyle and commitment to the church, but it should be remembered that a failure to increase in commitment, for example, does not mean one's commitment was low to begin with.

Table 13

Personal Gains

n = 202	Cronbach's alpha = .800	Mean	SD
1. I feel a responsibility to help my community, not only to develop my career.		4.23	.65
2. I feel a responsibility to help my church, not only to develop my career.		4.22	.71
3. I am developing/developed the ability to do quality research and writing while studying at AIIAS.		4.11	.74
4. My degree at AIIAS (has) strengthened my faith in God.		3.99	.79
5. My own standards of integrity (have) increased during my time at AIIAS.		3.98	.77
6. I am developing/developed time and resource management skills as part of my degree at AIIAS.		3.93	.69
7. My time at AIIAS has made me more inclined than before to spend time serving others.		3.91	.78
8. I am more dedicated to the mission of the Adventist Church now than I was before studying at AIIAS.		3.74	1.03
9. My lifestyle is less "Adventist" than it was before studying at AIIAS.*		3.67	1.04
	Total	3.98	.50

*Reverse coded

Reported personal gains varied with certain factors, in the same way as did all the other scales. Students who had spent time in the English Center reported lower overall personal gains compared to those who did not need English ($p = .022$). Students who had been on campus from 6-12 months reported lower personal gains ($M = 3.65$) than students who had been at AIIAS either more ($M = 4.06/4.13$) or less time ($M = 4.04$; $p < .001$). Married students reported greater gains ($M = 4.05$) than singles ($M = 3.80$; $p = .001$); doctoral students reported greater gains ($M = 4.09$) than master's students ($M = 3.93$; $p = .046$). Those who were not sure they would recommend AIIAS to others reported that they had gained less personally ($M = 3.75$ during their time on campus ($p = .002$) than those who would recommend AIIAS ($M = 4.03$).

Though only a few comments were made relating specifically to what students gained personally from their time at AIIAS, these were some of the most exciting responses received. There were general answers like "it helps a lot in terms of professional growth," or "it trained me to be a better pastor and administrator." There were also responses like "we can change our lives," or "true development takes place here." Respondents suggested that AIIAS was a place where they could improve, develop themselves, and "become more considerate and 'redemptive'" in their dealings with others.

English Center

Of the survey respondents, 47 had spent time in the English Center, with most of them (68%) spending less than 6 months there. On a 5-point Likert scale, all of the responses to the four English Center questions (see Table 14) averaged a score of 3, or "Neither agree nor disagree." These are the lowest average scores on the entire survey, which suggests that this is an area that may need some improvement. For comparison, one Australian study (Australian Government, 2008) of adult English learners found that a similar study showed a "mean satisfaction score" of 4.02, which is slightly higher than the AIIAS scores. The study also found that satisfaction scores were "lowest among Korean speakers (3.14) and Japanese speakers (3.61)" (Australian Government, 2008, p. 19). The data from this current study similarly showed the Korean speakers as having slightly lower satisfaction scores, but the numbers were not statistically significant. Neither were there statistically significant differences by length of time spent in the English Center, nor by current students vs. alumni, area of study, or gender.

In sum, students in an intensive English program are typically vocal about recommendations for their program, so this is not cause for undue concern. It has been found that students often have a clear understanding of the program's strengths and weaknesses (see for example Beamer & Sasaki, 2002). This suggests that, though the English Center concerns are not new, as the numbers

are the same for alumni and for current students, AIIAS may need to listen a little more to its English Center students, and work on building a more satisfactory program. Both students and administration also need to remember, however, that intensive language learning is inherently stressful, and that some of their concerns are a universal part of the language learning process, and will therefore never go away.

The qualitative responses relating to the English Center were few (there was no specific prompt asking about the English Center, just a generic question asking about AIIAS). They do, however, help us understand English Center concerns from a student perspective. A suggestion was made that “the English Center must consider Adult Teaching as an alternative methodology.” Some were concerned that “AIIAS will lose many Korean students next year.” They asked the next logical question. “Did AIIAS Administration do anything to rectify the problem with the English Center?” One student voiced a concern about the switch to semesters. “This semester system delayed the students from English center to be regular [students]. Because of this, I know some people who chose to go to other universities.” Negative comments like these, particularly from advanced students, are similar to those found in other studies on intensive language students (see for example, Vyhmeister, 1997; 2010).

Table 14

English Center

n = 47	Cronbach's alpha = .904	Mean	SD
1. My time in the English Center contributed to my success in graduate school.		3.45	.86
2. English Center staff were supportive of my needs.		3.40	.97
3. English Center staff are qualified professionals.		3.17	.99
4. The English Center curriculum was appropriate to my learning needs.		3.04	1.02
	Total	3.27	.85

Conclusion

Many conclusions can be drawn from a rich data set like this one. One of the least surprising, but perhaps most important, conclusions is that the most positive aspect of AIIAS is the international community. This was the most highly rated response, which clearly proclaims that this community loves living together and learning from each other! None of the differences between the means in this study were large, however, there are some patterns in the data that are worth noting. Small, but persistent differences can suggest places AIIAS may be able to change in order to better support students.

1. Students are significantly less positive about their graduate program during the second half of their first year of studies. The newness has worn off, and perhaps the “light at the end of the tunnel” is not yet visible. Whatever the reason, this is a group that appears to need encouragement, and should be listened to so that effective responsive support can be made available.
2. Students who spent time in the English Center are another group that is significantly less positive about their graduate experience, and this does not change once they meet their English requirement. It may be that the language barrier continues to make it difficult for them in their classes, or that they have to invest more effort in coursework, and therefore have less energy for the more interesting aspects of graduate life; or perhaps there is a cultural barrier that goes with the linguistic one. Whatever the reason, English Center graduates continue to struggle slightly more than other students throughout graduate school. Their needs should be further researched.
3. Single students are significantly less positive about their AIIAS experience, the friendliness of the community, the quality of their programs, and their own personal gains. Singles do not have the support that married students have. This is a group that AIIAS needs to be concerned about and actively nurture.
4. There were no significant differences found based on current students versus alumni, or based on when a person graduated within this sample. This suggests that any problem we are facing may not be particularly new, rather present for some time, provided this sampling of alumni is representative. This suggests institutional stability. This is often a strength, but can also be a persisting weakness in some situations, so this invites further research. Since there is uncertainty about the representativeness of the small sampling of alumni gained in this survey this suggestion must be considered with extreme caution.
5. Doctoral students were generally more satisfied than master’s students. Students who have been on campus longer tended to view their growth here

more positively, had higher scores on spirituality, and scored the personnel and academic quality higher, as well.

6. There were no significant differences found by academic discipline. This means that students, regardless of their area of studies, have similar feelings about AIIAS. There are no “good department, bad department” concerns on campus.
7. Not surprisingly, students who were unsure of whether they would recommend AIIAS to others scored significantly lower on nearly every measure. This suggests that, while some individuals may not be entirely satisfied with their AIIAS experience, they do not blame it on any one specific factor. Conversely, it may be that students who are unhappy about one thing may find that their bias colors everything about AIIAS for them. Fortunately, those who would not recommend AIIAS were only 3.4% of the total respondents.

In conclusion, the respondents went to great lengths to describe in detail what they appreciated (and did not appreciate) about AIIAS, and to make suggestions about how to improve. It was not enough, however, for students to be thankful for what AIIAS is; they asked for more. “AIIAS online programs are great. They should be developed further to assist a wider range of people in the world field.” “There should be PhD programs in the field of public health.” “If AIIAS could regularly conduct distance learning, it would be greatly appreciated.”

In short, AIIAS clearly has an incredibly dedicated set of students and alumni who care about its success. Many of them took the opportunity to thank AIIAS for the survey, to add best wishes, and to make positive remarks. “I love AIIAS very much because of the spiritual atmosphere, academic communication, lovely people, perfect weather. . . .” They said things like “God bless AIIAS! I miss AIIAS,” “thanks for the service AIIAS provides,” “everything was great,” “I loved the experience,” “would do it again.” “I am so proud of what AIIAS is doing in empowering the church across the entire the world. Thanks, AIIAS...”

Clearly, AIIAS has established a recognizable and well-appreciated identity. It requires courage to listen openly to student voices, and not attempt to counter them or cover them with other perspectives. In a real sense, AIIAS will always be equated with its students and graduates, even if much of what they know they learned before or after their AIIAS experience. The shared vision so clearly illustrated in this study is a strength of this institution. It should be guarded, nurtured, and proclaimed. This institutional identity is what AIIAS is all about.

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