

[Extended History]

History 1893 - 1928+

Claremont Union College: 25 years (1893 to 1917)

The first Seventh-day Adventist College outside North America, Claremont Union College opened its doors on 1 February, 1893. It was situated on 23 acres of land within walking distance of Kenilworth station. The impressive buildings and comprehensive curriculum are testimony to the vision of those early educators. The original stately double-storey college building has since been proclaimed a national monument and is today the focal building in a modern shopping complex.

Union College offered primary, secondary and tertiary education. College subjects included Greek and Latin, Trigonometry and Geometry, Chemistry and Physics, Logic and Moral Science. Besides the classical academic education, emphasis was placed on character development, a vocational programme, laws of health, physical training and culture. The College was open to all races and no distinction was made with regard to religious affiliation. In fact, half the students were not Seventh-day Adventists.

Over the 25 years of its existence, two distinct education points of view have waxed and waned with regard to curriculum. The ultimate goal was the same and that was to graduate students who were well prepared for life's tasks. The initial view favoured a strong four-year classical education such as was taught at other notable colleges and academies. With the passage of time, the emphasis swung to the offering of a shorter, more practical course. Despite academic polemics and financial problems compounded by the Anglo-Boer War, the College filled a vital role in providing a religious atmosphere with values that rang true for the 50-100 young people who studied there each year. It graduated 31 students, and many of these have been signally influential in both church and society.

South African Training College (1919 to 1922), Later Spion Kop College (1922 to 1927)

The site for Claremont Union College had been chosen because of the strong conviction that a secluded, rural location was most conducive to true education, but by 1917 sprawling urban growth posed a threat. Consequently the College was relocated on a mission station 20 miles from Ladysmith, Natal, and 1918 was spent in erecting buildings, largely from materials salvaged from Union College.

Staff and students transferred to the new site and classes began in 1919 with an enrolment of 27. Standards 5-8 were taught, along with a Worker's Course for those preparing for church work. As the College grew, a strong practical emphasis in the curriculum emerged. Two three-year courses, a Training Course and Normal Course, were developed.

When the college was advanced to the status of a junior college, major changes in academic offerings included the introduction of a one-year course in Shorthand, a two-year Normal Course (teacher training), and a four-year course resembling the classical course originally offered at Union College. The latter did not get much support and by 1923 all courses were two years in length: the Theological Course, Bible Workers' Course, Teacher Training Course and Commercial Course. It is interesting to note the swing in emphasis between the two colleges: the majority of the 31 graduates from Union College were teachers, while from Spion Kop the majority of the 30 graduates were from the Theology and Bible Workers' courses.

It soon became evident that the remote location and inaccessibility of Spion Kop College were insurmountable obstacles and in 1925 a committee was appointed to select a new location. After looking at 50 farms in the Western Cape, the committee unanimously chose Bakkerskloof with its flourishing almond and apricot orchards flanking Helderberg mountain. They purchased the 370 acres for ten thousand pounds, and the third phase of college development began.

Helderberg College: (1928+)

The new African Missionary College, as it was first called, opened in 1928 with two dormitories completed and plans for the construction of the administration building well under way. Apart from these, there were two staff cottages, farm sheds and outbuildings. The institution was renamed Helderberg College after the mountain towering protectively above it.

Despite the depression, the total enrolment climbed to 154 by 1930, and has grown steadily ever since. Today there are more than 60 buildings on campus including the church, administration and lecture buildings, library, auditorium, gymnasium and cafeteria, student centre, three-storey student residences, married students' flats, staff flats and homes, and separate church-operated primary and high schools. The growth of the College is probably best reflected in the number of graduates which has increased from 8 in 1929 to an average of 40-60 a year. Many of these graduates have continued their studies in South Africa and abroad.

The academic growth of the College can be viewed from three perspectives: the course offerings, academic qualifications of staff, and library holdings. A review of the course offerings of the past reveals periods of significant change and development. The first few years after 1928 saw a continuation of the courses offered at Spion Kop College. The staff were few in number but were well qualified, with the business manager, W B Commin, a chartered accountant. In the early thirties, courses were lengthened to three years, and course contents combined to best meet the needs of the church: Theological-Normal, Domestic Science-Normal, with Commercial-Normal being added in 1946. A two-year Bible Instructors' Course was also offered.

The first real major change in curriculum came in 1951 when the College became a senior college and, under the guidance of A J Raitt, started to offer the degree courses of the University of South Africa (UNISA) as part of the regular four-year diploma courses. Students could complete the requirements of the BA, BSc and BCom degrees within the four years. The UNISA connection served the College very well for the next 35 years with only minor adjustments to the curriculum. It included a recognised three-year primary teaching diploma in the eighties. The sixties saw a proliferation of diploma courses and some were lengthened and others shortened. A five-year theology programme was attempted, and even a pre-nursing course was published.

Graduation exercises became more formal with the change of status to senior college. The 1955 graduating class was the first to wear full academic regalia, including colours to represent the various fields of study. All subsequent classes followed suit and today it is part of the tradition and policy of the college.

The need for wider recognition and closer control over the curriculum led to the next major change under the leadership of Dr A O Coetzee in 1976 when an affiliation agreement was entered into with Andrews University (located in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA), to offer the BTh (Bachelor of Theology) and BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) degrees. From this initial agreement, the affiliation was extended to the BA degree which could also include a four-year elementary teaching qualification. Agriculture offered as a two-year Associate of Science degree met a specific demand for a few years but was later phased out. The eighties saw the introduction of a wider number of business and secretarial diploma courses.

The escalating cost of post-graduate study overseas precipitated plans to offer such degrees at Helderberg College. In 1981, under the leadership of Dr D Birkenstock, the Andrews University affiliation was extended when the MA in Religion degree was first offered on campus. The programme was spread over four years with a quarter being taught each year. Starting with Drs Strand and Heppenstall, many lecturers from overseas made a real contribution to the ministerial force in Southern Africa. The post-graduate degree gave impetus to the rapid expansion of the library, and in 1983 the E G White Research Centre and Heritage Room were officially opened by Mrs Hedwig Jemison.

In 1997, under the leadership of David F Allen, an additional affiliation agreement was entered into with Southern Adventist University (located in Collegedale, Tennessee, USA). This affiliation provided alternative accreditation and academic recognition for the BBA degree majoring in either accounting or management.

Changes in the South African education landscape subsequent to the first democratic elections in 1994 impacted directly on the College. In terms of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (No. 58 of 1995) and the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997), private institutions of higher learning were granted the opportunity of becoming fully accredited and registered providers of education, issuing their own degrees and diplomas. Those institutions whose qualifications were registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), and that met the requirements of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Department of Education (DoE) have been able to take their place alongside the public sector institutions in providing nationally and internationally recognized programmes of study. Helderberg College, under the academic leadership of Gerald T du Preez, received such accreditation and registration in 2001. Students who enrolled for degree programmes for the first time in 2001 thus began a course of study culminating in a Helderberg College degree, backed by SAQA, the CHE and the DoE. Students transferring to other tertiary institutions or wishing to engage in post graduate study in South Africa are able to do so with ease, as there is a common registering body with controlled standards and criteria. In addition, the courses done at Helderberg College are accredited by AAA (Adventist Accrediting Association), which make them transferable to any one of the more than 100 Seventh-day Adventist institutions worldwide.

The second perspective of the academic growth of the College has been the qualifications of the staff. From the start, the College has had well-qualified staff. In 1936, the small teaching staff had five teachers with masters' degrees, two with bachelors', and the remainder with recognised diplomas. The first teacher with a doctorate was H L Rasmussen who joined the staff in 1947 to teach history. In 1949 the principal, W E McClure, returned from furlough with a doctorate, as did F C Clarke, whose specialty was science. The offering of UNISA degrees on campus made it easier for a number of the staff to earn BA degrees and in many cases this led to post-graduate work. In the seventies there were up to five staff with doctorates. Some of the first lecturers to earn a doctorate at a South African University included Dr Hofni Joubert (in the late fifties) Dr Izak J van Zyl (in the seventies), with Dr Delyse Steyn being the first woman lecturer to achieve this. Helderberg College regards a master's degree as the minimum academic qualification for lecturers and through its staff development programme, encourages and assists the teaching faculty in upgrading their qualifications where needed.

The library is a barometer in any academic institution. Until 1952, the library at Helderberg College was housed on the top floor of the Administration Building, from where it was moved to the more spacious location on the ground floor of Anderson Hall. The book holdings increased from 4 000 in 1936 to 7 000 in 1947. In 1981, the Pieter Wessels Library, occupying all three floors in the renovated Meade House, was opened officially. While K B Cronjé was director of library services, book holdings topped 50 000, besides many other materials such as periodicals, audiotapes and teaching materials. In the basement is the E G White Research Centre and the

Heritage Room which opened in 1983 with Dr I J van Zyl as director. Through the SABINET link-up with all the major libraries in South Africa, the Pieter Wessels Library has been an invaluable asset not only to staff and students, but to users of these other libraries as well. The holdings had exceeded the 90 000 mark at one point, but as the College strives to keep books contemporary, due to "weeding", the number decreased to 80 000 in 2010. Instead, more support was also given to Online Journals.

Helderberg College owes a debt of gratitude to the many far-sighted educators who have laid a sound academic foundation, and faces the future with confidence that the necessary structures are in place for offering recognised degree and diploma courses taught by well-qualified staff, and with adequate library services to facilitate study and research.

Physical Wellbeing

The harmonious development of all the student's abilities, including his or her physical wellbeing, has been the basis for the work programme in the history of Helderberg College. Three concepts from the book *Education* by E G White have served since the inception of the College as guidelines in formulating a manual work programme: (a) to demonstrate the true dignity of labour – and so students have been involved in all aspects of work; (b) to recognise that God is constantly at work – and so to fulfil our mission, we must also be involved in productive activity; and (c) to teach the discipline of systematic, well-regulated labour as an aid to sound development and sense of self-worth.

Each of the colleges mentioned above generated activities suitable to its time and circumstances. Claremont Union College had as their main activities sewing, cooking, carpentry, gardening, janitorial services, dairy farming, bootmaking, typesetting and printing (forerunner of the Southern Publishing Association), and assisting with health treatments. Some students worked at the nearby Claremont Sanitarium, and later the Plumstea Sanitarium. Students were required to work seven hours a week for which they received payment to help defray fees.

Spion Kop College continued the tradition and philosophy, but other activities achieved prominence. A great deal of building was done and so students were involved in brickmaking, carpentry, and building construction. On the extensive farm lands, they helped with gardening, milking and harvesting. The repair shop sharpened ploughs and repaired trucks. In addition there were particular enterprises to provide work for the students and an income for the College, such as the clothing factory in which some fourteen students worked. Payment for one completed buttonhole was one and a half pence. A nut butter factory was started to provide a non-dairy spread which was in harmony with the health principles of the College. Students were required to work 30 hours a month, for which they were paid.

During the Helderberg College era (from 1928), the number and variety of work opportunities increased. Of the various enterprises launched through the years, the farm is the only one that has maintained operations to the present time and continues to provide the College with an income through olive groves, fruit and vegetables, and pine forestry. In the early days, the students worked as brickmakers, builders and carpenters to erect the various college buildings and homes. The new campus needed student workers to lay out gardens, trim hedges, and care for the appearance of the College.

With the number of new buildings going up, there was a greater need for cleaning crews. The growing enrolment also meant more students were needed to work in the kitchen and dining room. In the laundry, the young ladies did the washing and ironing, at first by hand and later with more sophisticated equipment. The need for trained drivers increased as the College became

more mechanised. The maintenance department was kept busy with plumbing, welding and electrical repairs.

The work activities have changed over the years, but it is still possible for a student to be exposed to a wide variety of activities, should he or she so choose. Today it is no longer compulsory to work a fixed number of hours on campus as in the past. However, exposure to practical work experience on or off campus is an integral part of the student's preparation for graduation. At present approximately a third of the students apply for work bursaries of 5-15 hours per week which enable them to earn up to a third of their fees. Through their work experiences on campus, many students have gained skills that have helped them contribute to building communities wherever they have gone.

Many alumni have attributed their success in part to the effective time management, interpersonal skills and respect for productive work that they had learned while in college. And many are the alumni world-wide who can still on occasion recall with satisfaction the sound of the knock-off bell!

Spiritual Wholeness

Since it is a Christian College, a major objective is to “make religion a personal experience in the life of each student, a practical religion which finds expression in the standards of conduct, in the attitudes and ideals, and in the development of a sense of individual responsibility for the betterment of mankind” (Principal M P Robison, College Clarion, 1932).

While the forms of spiritual activity have varied over the course of the years, the basic sources of spiritual nourishment have remained surprisingly constant – worship services in church, dormitory and chapel, and the quiet times of personal meditation and prayer. However, spiritual wholeness also requires also the outward swing of the pendulum – from receiving to sharing. Helderberg students have never been at a loss for ways to serve.

As we look back and relive the more than a century of Adventist education in South Africa, it is gladdening to see in the lives of students from these colleges the heartbeat of commitment, and a sense of “an individual responsibility for the betterment of mankind”.

Happiness - Living And Faring Well

An essential part of college life is learning the fine art of living and faring well – an art learned as much out of class as within. For it is above all, in the leisure time and social activities that students have been able to develop ways of conducting themselves in varying social and cultural environments.

Music students share their talents and various gatherings. The College choir, currently directed by Jannie Kritzinger, still provides lustre to meetings. CD's of recordings done by different College choirs over the years can be ordered from Mr Jannie Kritzinger, by cont tcting him at +27 (0)21 850 7500, or writing to him at music@hbc.ac.za.

Student organisations have always played an important role in the activities of the College. For a number of years the Faculty of Business Studies has formed the Business Exposure Club, which provided a forum for involvement with students in other institutions. The TSA (Theology Students

Association) is active in inviting speakers from many walks of life to address the students in that Faculty. The Faculty of Arts, similarly coordinates activities to meet the social and academic needs of its students. The SRC (Student Representative Council) liaises between students and the College administration and arranges numerous student activities like annual camps, sports and social programmes. The new student magazine, facilitated by the Faculty of Arts, is known as HBC 360.

These varied activities have been a vital part of the all-round development that moulded shy, new students into confident, capable servant leaders.