EMU Students Win Church History Essay Contest

By Jenna Martin
Staff Writer

Four EMU students have recently earned money for their talents at writing about Mennonite history. The annual John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest just recently announced its first, second, and third place winners for 2003.

Seventy percent of the budget shortfall include the Augsburger Endowment launched last October, which is hoped to reach $5 million, $2 million of which are mat- tered to financial aid. The low earning potential of endowments has reduced their attractiveness to big donors, however, which has forced the seminary to rely increasingly on less dependable one-time gifts.

The “Stand in the Gap” fund, an appeal to seminarians’ home congregations for one-time gifts, has mixed success. The church’s response has not gener- ally been as strong as hoped, though individual donors have been generous, with one writing a check of $160,000.

Many other individuals stepped forward as well, with some returning students even voluntar- ily giving up some of their financial aid in order to add several thousand dollars to the amount that was able to be designat- ed to incoming seminarians. Additionally, the full-time faculty agreed to give up the $750 raise that the university had awarded them this year. Weather Vane has been informed that this money was actually used to insure that returning students’ scholarships would remain intact.

All of this has allowed the seminary to supplement the matching church grants, the only financial aid incoming students had been receiving. Thus, it was possible to extend a reduced grant of $10,000 for each student who had been slated to receive a Ministry Leadership Award, which hopes that “in the future, a majority of our student body will be able to attend the seminary with the discem- berment, commissioning and financial support of congrega- tions.”

If strong, unrestricted giving continues, and if the market turns around, incoming stu- dents will do much better in the future.

The seminary does view this year’s crisis as an exception, though Stutzman did caution that the status of the seminary’s endowments will certainly have an effect on what financial aid it offers in the future.

Second place in the gradu- ate category went to Rickard Eby, who graduated from EMU in 1991 and is now tak- ing education courses at EMU’s Lancaster, PA campus. His paper, entitled “The Role of Temperament in the 1847 Mennonite Church Split and its Applications for Today’s Church” earned him $75.

In the University category, EMU sophomore Paul J. Yoder won $50 for third place.

Not unfamiliar to the con- testant, Yoder had submitted a paper to the Horsch contest while in high school and earned second place.

This year, his paper titled “Virginia Mennonites and the Question of Race: A History of Trial and Integration” explores racial issues in Virginia Mennonite society. His paper also looks at EMU’s role in integrating social change and integration among Mennonites. Written for Intro to History class last fall, he enjoys his- torical writ- ing and is a H istori cal Educa- tion major.

Sara Hershberger, currently a first-year-student, tied for second place in the high school division.

After receiving a letter describing the contest in the mail, her Anabaptist Heritage class teacher encouraged her to enter. Written while a senior at Eastern Mennonite High School, her paper is called “How Shall We Serve?”

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(usually with longer tenures) have more time before they will need to earn a living and the cost of tuition is higher for graduate students than for undergrads, who might be surprised by the amount of their tuition that goes to offset the costs of a large, intensely learning environment. For example, a first-year-student at the university pays $10,000 in financial aid just through this system.

This was all during what was labeled a university-wide situa- tion of “financial exigency,” which has prompted various budget cuts and a hiring freeze. Now the question is: what do we do, and how do we do it? The Board of Trustees, acting on the recommendation of the Eastern Mennonite Seminary’s annual financial report and the executive committee of the seminary’s board of trustees, has decided to give first priority to the seminary’s financial aid to returning students.

A recent loss of an endowment has contributed to the financial exigency that was plaguing the entire school. Both Shenk and Stutzman told Weather Vane that the seminary would need to raise new funds because we’ve just had the Lilly Grant not a onetime gift, but a balm to soothe any wounds that were created.

The Lilly Grant was awarded to the seminary not only because of the stock market collapse that had just occurred. Because of the stock market collapse, budgets and endowments were necessary to maintain the financial aid to offset increasing tuition costs.

This problem seemed to be solved in 1998, when a $1.3 million Lilly Grant was awarded to the seminary, a large portion of which was designated for student financial aid, specifically full tuition and stipend packages for individuals with tremendous leadership potential at the seminary. The Lilly grant was nearly 40 percent higher than at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN, where the average EMU student had financial aid to cover more than half of that cost.

The Lilly Grant was not a permanent stream of financial aid to students, however; it was meant to fund a developmental office and pay the salaries of staff who would solicit endowments that could continue to provide revenue to the seminary long after the initial grant funds ran out. But as the Lilly Grant monies began to dry up, the endowments that had been raised for the seminary were frozen because of the stock market collapse that had just occurred.

SPRINGFIELD Seminary University, with its unique conserva- tionist policy concerning endowments, attempting to insure that the seminary was not creating a situation in which the money taken would be used for the ends less is than the money that the endowments are accruing in interest. This allows the endowments to grow from year to year without adding to the principal funds.

The stock market’s decline in recent years triggered a revers- sal of the trend, and endowments at Eastern Mennonite University-wide began to lose money from year to year. In an unprecedented move, the Board of Trustees froze all of the usage