

January 8, 2025

Subject: Summary of Executive Committee Meeting and Decisions Regarding Bass Memorial Academy

Dear Gulf States Conference Family,

I am writing on behalf of the Gulf States Conference Executive Committee which met on January 7th for six hours. During the meeting, the committee listened to several hours of presentations sharing ideas to address the challenges currently facing Bass Memorial Academy. Following are the key points and conclusions from the meeting:

1. Bass Memorial Academy's Legacy and Impact

Bass Memorial Academy has a rich and significant legacy within both our conference and the broader Kingdom of God. Its alumni have achieved notable success in various areas, including education and financial prosperity, while also leaving a spiritual legacy that will extend into eternity.

2. Appreciation for Presenters and Community Support

The committee expressed appreciation to the presenters who dedicated their time to research, develop plans, and travel to share their thoughts and ideas with the committee. Their presentations revealed passion and thoughtful consideration of the issues, and a desire to see Bass Memorial Academy move forward. All emails received as a result of the town hall meetings regarding Bass Memorial Academy were also shared with the committee. Additionally, approximately fifty alumni pledged a total of \$142,000 per year for the next three years to help support Bass Memorial Academy, should it continue operation. This outpouring of support is a testament to the profound impact Bass Memorial Academy has had on the lives and families of all who have attended.



3. **Financial Challenges, Sustainability, and Mission**

While the committee acknowledged the financial difficulties Bass Memorial Academy is currently facing, it also recognized the reality that the conference is unable to continue funding the academy at the levels required over the last several years. The financial burden has become unsustainable, with the cost to the conference this year approaching \$2 million. Continuing in this manner would strain the overall conference budget, impacting other vital ministries of the conference. The committee emphasized the Gulf States Conference mission to support Adventist education in our field, and how this aligns with the evolving needs of families.

4. **Evolving Needs for Families**

Our committee wrestled with the question: What should Adventist education look like to best serve the families and students of the Gulf States Conference in the future? Currently, three of our churches provide a high school option, in addition to Bass Memorial Academy, with a fourth school exploring the addition of a high school program next year. It's clear that many families desire Adventist Education options closer to home.

5. **Decisions and Actions Taken**

After careful deliberation, the committee made the following decisions to address financial challenges, while continuing to meet the educational needs of our families and remain faithful stewards of the resources that are entrusted to us by your faithfulness in tithes and offerings:

i. **Cease the Operations of Bass Memorial Academy**

The committee has decided it cannot continue to provide funding in the amount necessary for Bass Memorial Academy to continue operating, therefore, Bass Memorial Academy will cease operations at the end of the 2024-25 school year.

ii. **Revision the Future of Adventist Education in Gulf States Conference**

The attached document, voted and approved by the committee, outlines the Gulf States Conference vision of Adventist education in the future with the reallocation of resources to fund the continued development of Adventist education in our conference.

6. Outcomes and Benefits of these Decisions

These decisions will accomplish the following outcomes:

- i. Restoring the Gulf States Conference to a balanced budget to preserve our financial stability.
- ii. Maintaining stewardship over the resources entrusted to us by the faithful tithes and offerings of our members.
- iii. Continuing support for families and students who wish to experience the benefits of a Seventh-day Adventist boarding academy education.
- iv. Providing an essential increase of support to our elementary schools.
- v. Increasing the availability of day academies for families in our conference.
- vi. Ensuring that other important ministries continue to receive the resources necessary to serve the members of the Gulf States Conference.

The Gulf States Conference remains committed to supporting Adventist education and the needs of our families. As we move forward, there are additional matters regarding Bass Memorial Academy that the committee will wrestle with. We ask for your continued prayers as we navigate this process.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we work together to steward the resources entrusted to us for the growth and well-being of our conference.

On behalf of the Gulf States Conference Executive Committee,
Warm regards,



D. Brian Danese
President, Gulf States Conference



Gulf States Conference Office of Education

Following are the plans that the Gulf States Conference Executive Committee voted to enact for the 2025-26 school year:

1: Students Who Wish to Attend a Boarding Academy

The Bass Memorial Academy Legacy Endowment will award scholarships annually to high school students from the Gulf States Conference, offering them the opportunity to attend an accredited Seventh-day Adventist boarding academy in another conference. Each recipient will receive a scholarship of \$5,000 per year (\$2,500 per semester). A total of 50 scholarships will be available each year.

Funding:

- \$250,000/year

Criteria:

- The student's family must demonstrate a commitment to the ministry of a Gulf States Conference Church.
- Applications should be submitted to the Gulf States Conference Office of Education by June 30 each year. Applications must be signed by both the church pastor and treasurer.
- The scholarship will be sent directly to the boarding academy once proof of attendance has been provided.
- Priority for these scholarships will be given to students attending Bass Memorial Academy during the 2024-25 school year.

2: Funding for GSC Elementary Schools Based on Enrollment

The cost of operating an elementary school has risen significantly, making it increasingly difficult for local churches to maintain these schools. This funding initiative is designed to provide essential financial support to our existing Gulf States Conference schools and to facilitate the expansion of elementary schools across the Gulf States Conference.

Each Gulf States Conference school will receive \$1,000 per year (\$500 per semester) for every student enrolled, from PreK through 12th grade.

Funding:

- \$400,000/year

3: Funding for GSC Elementary Schools for Special Needs

Schools may apply for funding in support of special projects, such as curriculum development, facility improvement, technology upgrades, marketing initiatives, and other essential needs.

Funding:

- \$50,000/year

Criteria:

- School boards must submit a proposal detailing their plans and specifying the funds requested.
- The Gulf States Conference Education ADCOM team will review each proposal and determine the funding allocation for each request.

4: Students Who Wish to Remain at Home for High School

The Gulf States Conference Office of Education will continue to work closely with current elementary schools who wish to provide high school-level education. Two possible options include:

1. Obtaining Jr. Academy Status
2. Partnering with Atlanta Adventist Academy to provide a real-time, virtual interactive education program

5: Online Education for GSC Students with No Access to an Adventist School.

This plan is currently in development and will proceed based on interest from our Gulf States Conference Constituency.

This funding will enable us to partner with an established Gulf States Conference school (or deliver the program independently through the Conference Office) to offer online education for Grades 3-8, specifically targeting students in rural areas who lack access to Gulf States Conference Adventist Education.

Funding:

- Unused funds from Plan #2

**** This document will be reviewed and updated annually by the Gulf States Conference Executive Committee.*