

I attended the Constituent Conferences Committee meeting with Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) on Jan. 18. There were several other conferences represented, including Allegheny, Virginia, Central District and Franconia, along with representatives from the college and seminary. Questions were raised of conference representatives as to whether congregations valued an M.Div. degree over a college degree and whether a Mennonite seminary was valued over others.

Additionally, it was mentioned that EMU sees community and state colleges as the competition. This information was based on students who had applied to both state schools and EMU. I reported that in some of our congregations, EMU is not even considered as an option. I mentioned that some of our students were not choosing to apply to Mennonite colleges because their parents or congregations were more theologically conservative than the larger churches.

It was recommended that the colleges might want to recruit Mennonite students who do not attend Mennonite high schools but who live in areas with a high concentration of Mennonites. University leaders and conference representatives reported that in some cases the children of Mennonite college alumni are being encouraged to attend more “prestigious” universities to take advantage of a broader offering of educational opportunities even though EMU does well at placing students in graduate and professional programs.

The EMU administration reported that Mennonite Higher Ed will be changing its reporting relationship to the larger denomination but that the final relationships had not yet been determined.

The University staff expressed appreciation of the survey results which were shared with them.

— Keith Hostetler