

Surviving and Succeeding

BY CARLOS ARCHBOLD

Because of its immediate proximity to the United States, the Caribbean basin is often affected adversely by whatever happens to the north. The 9/11 terrorist attack was no exception. This crisis, which affected the U.S. economy, also had a devastating effect on many parts of the Inter-American Division (IAD). For example, decreased tourism has affected private enterprises, which include the Adventist educational system. However, God has been merciful, and our educational system has survived despite these challenges. Throughout the past five years, other circumstances such as political tensions and currency devaluation have been major obstacles, but these have not discouraged our teachers, who continue to fulfill the mission of the church. Adventist education continues to confront all these challenges and to thrive.

Graduate Education

During this quinquennium, the Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary received candidacy status from the Association of Theological Schools. The seminary offers a Master of Arts in pastoral theology and a Doctor of Ministry. These programs are offered on the campuses of selected tertiary institutions within the IAD. Another major step in professional education was the opening of the School of Dentistry at Montemorelos University—the first of its kind in the division. Antillian Adventist University now offers a Master's degree in education. Northern Caribbean Univer-

sity has expanded its graduate program to offer a Ph.D. in education, and recently received accreditation of its Master's program in business administration from the local government.

Undergraduate Level

Of the 12 tertiary institutions in the Inter-American Division territory, all but one are accredited by the Adventist Accrediting Association and their respective governments. By the time this report appears, that institution will be well on its way to receiving accreditation from its local government. A staff of 1,016 teachers caters to an enrollment of 12,391 students in three major languages: English, Spanish, and French.

In June 2004, the first IAD convention for college professors was held at Montemorelos University with the theme, "Pursuing Excellency While

Preserving the Mission." More than 200 participants met to renew their commitment to Christian education. A convention highlight was the agreement for all institutions to collaborate in the areas of



The Maranatha Adventist Elementary School in Venezuela was chosen by local officials in 2003 as the best Christian school.



Puerto Rico Adventist middle and high school students participate in a public health awareness event.

research and support.

Two institutions were upgraded from high school to college level. First, in the outskirts of Navojoa, North Mexico, Colegio del Pacifico became Universidad de Navojoa. This institution has full accreditation by the state and has made a positive impact in the surrounding community. In South Mexico, in addition to Colegio Linda Vista (secondary level), there is now Universidad Linda Vista. The governor of the state of Chiapas was present at the inauguration ceremony of this institution. His older brothers, and three members of his cabinet who accompanied him to the ceremony, completed their high school education at Colegio Linda Vista. This event was a stirring testimony to the influence of Adventist education.

Another milestone was the increased enrollment at Northern Caribbean University (NCU) from 1,800 in 1999 to almost 5,000 in 2004. In fact, NCU has become one of the favored tertiary institutions in Jamaica.

Whether in Colombia, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Trinidad, Haiti, Venezuela, or Costa Rica, we rejoice at the consistent growth and maturity of students and committed teaching staff.

The Adventist Church has been very fortunate to obtain permission from the Cuban government to operate a seminary to prepare pastors. For several years, it operated as an extension of Montemorelos University, but after a recent evaluation, it was recommended

that the seminary operate independently. This will give it some flexibility to address the unique educational needs of the society in which it is located.

Secondary and Elementary Education

The closing report for 2004 indicates that there are 336 secondary schools and 680 elementary schools, with 137,222 students enrolled in these levels, of which 61,883 are Adventists. At the K-12 level, 8,186 teachers are employed. The division is divided into 15 unions; 11 are Spanish-speaking, two are French, and two are English.

The past five years have seen some of the most active hurricane seasons in the history of this region. Several of the unions were hit hard by these storms.

But the system survived. One example of great determination and faith occurred in Haiti, the union with the most members. In addition to the other challenges in their school system, they suffered great losses during the 2004 hurricane season. Recognizing the need for external assistance, the union director of education created a foundation that has already gathered support from outside the country to help train teachers and build new schools, since only 15 percent of our Haitian schools have their own buildings.

Adventism in Mexico has experienced substantial changes during the past few years. For a long time, it was a challenge to operate private schools in Mexico. In recent years, Adventist schools have become well known in



Colegio Algeciras students in front of their remodeled school building in Colombia.



Puerto Rico academy students march in a non-smoking rally through the streets of old San Juan.



The recorder group for the Savonna-la-mar Adventist Preparatory School plays at the West Jamaica Readers Expo.



Administration building of the new Navojoa University in Mexico.



The inspiration behind the School of Dental Technicians, Dr. Lloyd Baum (far left), and his family with the bust erected in his honor at Montemorelos University in Mexico.

their communities and have won recognition for their performance.

Our two English-speaking unions are located in the Caribbean, where many of the islands also suffered the effects of the recent hurricanes, especially in 2004. However, enrollment in the South Caribbean area has increased, with 1,750 baptisms from the school protectorate during the quinquennium. One of the outstanding events in that union is the annual talent parade. High school students from across the union convene to showcase their artistic talents and public-speaking skills. The logistics of the event are challenging, since gathering students from 14 high schools in a variety of island countries requires sub-



The large new gymnasium at Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica can accommodate the school's growing enrollment.

stantial travel and lodging expenses. However, participating in this activity continues to be the dream of the students.

Puerto Rico also had its share of hurricanes, but has recuperated from their effects, and its educational program is very strong. As a commonwealth associated with the United States, the island qualifies for educational development funds, so our church wrote a successful proposal to fund more than 60 workshops and seminars for their teaching staff. Reading the New Testament as a school project was a great success both at the elementary and secondary level. To further strengthen the Adventist commitment to service, they have added a course in community service for all secondary-level students.

Venezuela has had its share of political tensions and difficult moments, but the Adventist educational system has survived. In 2003, in the state of Bolivar, the Maranatha School was chosen by local authorities as the best Christian school. In Puerto Ordaz, Colegio Andrés Bello won both first and second prize at the state level in the Twelfth Conference on Science and Technology.

When hurricane winds threatened, our territory had to make necessary preparations. In like manner, recognizing the many challenges our schools may face, we are developing strategies to both address the threats and take advantage of the opportunities. We feel as-

sured that with God's help, the success of Adventist education is certain. ✍



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