



SAD

Growing Seventh-day Adventist Education in a Sustainable Way

BY CARLOS A. MESA

The Adventist Education Network in the South American Division (SAD) is growing, not only in relation to the number of students, teachers, and staff, but also in terms of the quality of education offered and the spiritual training provided. In the past five years, many projects, programs, and actions enhanced the school environment of the eight countries in the South American Division (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay). The yearly goals have been achieved and even surpassed, thus showing the vitality of an educational system that is gaining greater respect and has created a unified operation in these countries.

In the past quinquennium, the

South American Division had at least 10 major accomplishments in religious, pedagogical, administrative, and financial areas. In 2005, the

Adventist educational network in the SAD comprised 809 primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges. By October 2009, this figure had increased to 881 schools—including 38 new secondary schools, two of which include boarding facilities and a tertiary-level training program. Moreover, during the same period, the division began 19 new undergraduate and eight new graduate programs.

Between 2005 and 2009, the number of SAD teachers (elementary through tertiary) increased from 14,113 to 16,168, and the student enrollment grew from 198,571 to 232,116. Including the 2010 enrollment increase of 4,971 reveals that the number of students in SAD increased by almost 20 percent between 2005 and 2010 (a nearly four percent increase per year).

During the past five years, SAD schools, colleges, and boarding institutions undertook many new construction projects, which led to a significant expansion of the Adventist educational network in the region. A total of U.S.\$104 million was invested in construction projects during the quinquennium. The re-designing and rebuilding of the



The Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) team interviews students during an evaluation at Peruvian Union University, Juliaca campus, in 2007.

Seventh-day Adventist Technical Institute in Ecuador (ATIE) and the completion of the construction of the Amazon Seventh-day Adventist College (FAAM) are two SAD projects funded in part by the world church's 2009 third-quarter Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

Development Plans

But beyond mere figures and statistics, Seventh-day Adventist schools in the South American Division have also established themselves as part of a trustworthy educational network in the eyes of the church constituency and the general public, mainly due to the system's ongoing emphasis on academic quality and moral/spiritual values instruction. In addition to the blessings and the divine approval seen in every plan and project, growth can be attributed to well-defined goals and effective implementation. Specific development plans were put in place in 10 areas:

Council of College and University Presidents—Currently, there are 12 tertiary institutions and four higher education extension programs in the SAD territory, which enroll 21,475 students. A Council of Seventh-day Adventist College and University Presidents was created in 2006 with a very clear mission: to make a positive contribution to the Adventist educational system, and to produce graduates who are ethical, proactive, and creative, and who show a deep commitment to spreading the gospel to the world. The goals of this council include: (1) strengthening spiritual-life activities in the institutions of higher learning; (2) making human, economic, and institutional resources available to the church within a plan of integrated evangelism; (3) acting as an advisory body to the SAD union departments of education; (4) taking part in the general planning

for higher education throughout the division; (5) aiding Adventist colleges and universities in offering programs that are committed to excellence and supportive of the Adventist philosophy of education; and (6) supporting and managing the exchange of scientific publications.

Spiritual Master Plan—The Spiritual Master Plan (SMP), which has been implemented in each SAD school during this quinquennium, is a



very important accomplishment because it shows the division's commitment to the evangelistic mission of the church.

After measures of spirituality are assessed on each division campus, the findings will be used to plan activities that will enhance faculty and student understanding of Seventh-day Adventist principles, beliefs, and values that contribute to personal and col-

lective growth.

These actions will include ongoing improvements in the religion curriculum, the involvement of a substantial percentage of faculty and students in spiritual and evangelistic programs, and pastoral visits to students' families by teachers, administrators, and chaplains.

Textbooks—In the past five years, the SAD made significant progress in providing new textbooks for its schools. Church publishing houses now produce materials for every level (elementary through secondary), group, and subject in Portuguese, and are working on Spanish textbooks. Currently, there are more than 100 different textbooks in these two languages being produced in a joint effort with the church's two publishing houses in SAD (Brazil Publishing House and South American Spanish Publishing House), which ensures that Adventist teachings and philosophy are present in the materials used by students.

An Education Website—Because of the technological advances in our school communities, the division realized that it needed a Website that could provide materials and re-



Main entrance of the new Amazon Adventist College in Belem, Brazil, 2009.

sources for parents, students, and teachers. The new SAD Website (<http://www.educacaoadventista.org.br>) has become a valued tool because of its multiple databases and other online resources. According to data from 2009, about seven million pages have been accessed. The Website also seeks to foster online communication among parents, teachers, and students. It is currently available to the Brazilian unions and is being introduced in the remaining countries of the division.

Student and Faculty Cooperation Agreements and Exchanges—In the past five years, the SAD has encouraged faculty exchanges in other countries within the Adventist educational network for brief periods of time. These agreements have helped to foster unity and collaboration.

A Standardized Publicity Campaign—Another important accomplishment during this quinquennium has been the unification, for the first time, of the message presented to the public by means of a publicity campaign (see <http://www.educacaoadventista.br> and <http://www.educacionadventista.com>). These have ensured the better conceptualization of the Adventist educational message and its more effective transmission through an advertising campaign. This unified concept has been also strengthened through the adoption of a standard uniform for every school in the division.

Plans for Integrating Evangelism and Education—During the past five years, the division's educational network has participated in Adventism's global plan of integrated evangelism. SAD teachers and students are involved in a variety of strategies, such as small groups, missionary teams, intercessory prayer, hospitality, public evangelism, Bible classes, and discipleship.

Pedagogical Handbook—In 2009, the SAD published *Seventh-day Adventist Pedagogy* in Portuguese and



Students in workshop classroom at the Milton Afonso Adventist School, Brazilia, Brazil, in 2009.



Work team of the Portal of Adventist Education, Brazil Publishing House, Tatui, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Spanish. This handbook was prepared by a group of educational experts and division leaders, with the support of local Adventist publishing houses. The book elaborates on the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education, and will serve as a reference handbook for administrators, educators, and the general public.

Ellen White's Books—Ellen White's education books were made available to the faculty of every Adventist school in the division.

Standardization of Financial Management, Software, and Phone Systems—In the past five years, financial software and even IP (Inter-



Brazil Adventist University students doing missionary work in Sao Paulo, 2008.

Seventh-day Adventist education in South America during the past five years. Clearly, education in the South American Division has a balanced approach and is committed to technical, learning, and pedagogical improvements, as well as in the spiritual edification of students, faculty, and staff.

Goals for the Next Quinquennium

For the next five years (2010 to 2015), the SAD educational network has

involves the ongoing process of standardization;

2. *Religious initiatives*, which focus on the Spiritual Master Plan, religious courses for Adventist teachers who have not attended church colleges, the integration of faith and learning, chaplaincy ministries, integrated evangelism, increased emphasis on creationism, and the celebration of Christian Education Day in our churches;

3. *Management*, which will emphasize showing greater appreciation for professionals, the training of managers, job descriptions for school management positions, policies for hiring school administrators; and the creation of new courses and programs;

4. *Academic development*, which among other initiatives, will focus on the training of leaders and experts, and providing academic support for primary school education;

5. *Community projects*, which will continue the current emphasis involving students in service and voluntarism; and

6. *Institutional development*, which will focus on expanding school facilities and implementing new programs.

The data for the current quinquennium show that Adventist education in the SAD has made considerable progress, but also reveal that there are challenges ahead. ✍



New engineering building at Peruvian Union University, Lima, Peru, 2008.

net Protocol) phone systems have been standardized in all SAD schools. This has resulted in cost reduction, more efficient transmission of data, and a decrease in errors.

These landmarks and initiatives summarize the accomplishments of

well-defined goals that emphasize the religious, evangelistic, and pedagogical aspects of education. Six major areas have been highlighted:

1. *Unity of the network*, which in-



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