



Colorful and Challenging Education

By L. Herbert Fletcher

In Inter-America Seventh-day Adventist education continues to be colorful and challenging. The division conducts schools in countries on the mainland from Mexico south through Central America to Colombia, Venezuela, and the Guyanas, as well as throughout the Caribbean Islands. School is conducted in four major languages—Spanish, English, French, and Dutch.

Education in the Inter-American Division presents unique challenges. During this quinquennium we have had earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions, as well as revolutions in several countries, plus the challenge of keeping pace with the accelerating growth of evangelism.

This report will offer glimpses into the various levels of Adventist educa-

tion in Inter-America—graduate, undergraduate, secondary, and elementary.

Graduate Education

Graduate education in Inter-America, up until 1989, was conducted only through extension programs by Andrews and Loma Linda universities. Andrews University currently offers three programs in religion, one in education, and one in administration in our division. Currently, we are in the process of negotiating one more, in religious education, with emphasis on marriage and family. Enrollment ranges from 22 to 60 students.

Through our relationship with Loma Linda, four public health programs are taught. The total controlled enrollment in public health is 200. This program is currently run under the auspices of the health department of the division.

Loma Linda University also offers a graduate extension degree in administration and leadership. At the graduation exercises held in November 1989, 61 students received degrees. Currently we are negotiating the Specialist in Education degree. At the moment, there are 40 students lined up for each of two programs to begin in 1990.

At our division Board of Higher Education meeting in 1988 we recommended two graduate programs passed on to us from Montemorelos University. These programs have been studied by a survey team from the General Conference International Board of Education, and actually began in 1989-1990. Contrasted with our extension programs, which go for four or five years by summers, these will be ongoing.

Undergraduate Education

The Inter-American Division continues to offer nine undergraduate programs, including studies at our seminary in Cuba. Several events



took place during the quinquennium 1985-1990. These were:

1. Undergraduate extension programs were moved from Montemorelos to the Cuba Seminary, where 20 students will receive the bachelor's degree in 1991.
2. A similar program at Colegio Adventista Secundario in Nicaragua provides two years of ministerial training. This will enable us to supply the Nicaragua Mission with pastors. Plans are underway to train educational workers as well. Currently, with the aid of Adventist Development and Relief Agency, more land has been acquired and buildings are being erected.
3. During the 1989-1990 school year Montemorelos University began to offer the first year of theology at both of the boarding academies in Mexico—Linda Vista and Colegio del Pacifico.
4. Universidad Adventista Dominicana, our university in the Dominican Republic, conducts two extension programs: one in the south, on the campus of the day academy, Colegio Metropolitano, in the city of Santo Domingo; and a second in the north, on the campus of Centro Educacional Adventista, in the city of Santiago.
5. Our university in Colombia, Universidad Adventista Colombiana, teaches the first year of theology on the campus of the boarding

academy, Venezuela Vocational Institute, located in Nirgua, Venezuela. Proposals to church and state have been presented to upgrade this academy to a university. We are currently waiting for their final approval.

Other positive developments include an increase in library holdings, and several newly established computer centers. Each union has held teachers' institutes, and industrial development has taken place with the aid of Inter-American Division Health Foods.

During this quinquennium, five of the colleges and universities have gained General Conference accreditation. Eight of our nine tertiary institutions now have church accredita-



tion, and five have full state accreditation from their respective governments. Of the three remaining, one, by an affiliation agreement with Andrews University, grants Andrews degrees, thereby allowing its graduates to have an accredited diploma.

Enrollment at this level grew from 3,207 in 1985-1986 to 4,900 in 1988-1989, while the number of teachers increased from 329 to 394.

New Buildings

At the tertiary level, new buildings have been constructed on the following campuses: at Antillian College, a student recreation center; at Caribbean Union College, renovation and expansion of the old press, and a new library; at Montemorelos University, an amphitheater for the medical school, a new church, and a new student center; at Haitian University, a new auditorium with eight classrooms, and new guest quarters on campus; at West Indies College, a new library.

Evangelistic campaigns, colporteur-ing, weeks of prayer, Ingathering,

youth activities, and baptisms are regular features of the education program in Inter-America.

Baptisms

Overall, between 1985-1986 and 1988-1989, 12,139 young people were baptized in the Inter-American Division through the ministry of our schools: 3,583 at the primary level, 3,710 at the secondary level, and 691 at the college level.

Secondary Education

Secondary education in Inter-America continues on apace. There are 137 schools, 19 of which are boarding academies. Twelve of these are free-standing institutions, while seven are conducted on the campuses of colleges or universities where they share part of the physical plant. The enrollment has grown from 22,300 to 24,500. During the quinquennium, 40 of these institutions have earned Board of Regents accreditation, 15 have organized Colporteur Clubs with the aid of the

publishing departments, and five have had extensive building projects.

Secondary and primary enrollment represent nine percent of the church membership. Due chiefly to the political situation in some countries, elementary enrollment has fallen. During the period under review, the number of schools fell from 509 to 492, with an enrollment decrease from 59,000 to 56,600.

During this Year of the Adventist Teacher, each union has held recognition events for teachers.

Here in Inter-America, we continue to try to maintain a level of 10 percent church membership enrollment in our schools, but admittedly, it is difficult to keep pace with evangelism. Enrolling more of the children of our church remains one of our major challenges for the upcoming quinquennium. However, we remain optimistic that with the support of church members and God's blessings, Adventist education in Inter-America will continue to flourish and expand. □