



Ethiopia Adventist College

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SAFAWO GULLO

Safawo Gullo, DVM, MS, PhD, is president of Ethiopia Adventist College. He has served for c. 27 years as an educator in public and Seventh-day Adventist colleges in the United States. Born at Kuyera, Ethiopia, he attended Kuyera Elementary School and Kuyera Academy and later returned to teach there. He is married to Shirna Gullo, a nursing professor, and they have two daughters.

Ethiopia Adventist College (EAC) is the only Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher education in Ethiopia. The institution traces its beginnings to Adventist mission and youth training initiatives at Kuyera in the late 1940s and has developed over time into a multi-program tertiary institution serving the church and the wider community.¹

Location and Campus

EAC is situated at Kuyera on approximately 182 hectares (about 450 acres) of land, about 235 kilometers (146 miles) south of Addis Ababa (Finfinne). According to denominational historical reporting, Emperor Haile Selassie granted the Kuyera property to the Ethiopia Union Mission in 1947 for mission and educational purposes²

Pioneer Foundations at Kuyera (1909-1952)

A major early figure associated with Kuyera was missionary [Valdemar Emil Toppenberg](#). In his autobiographical account, Toppenberg reported first arriving in Ethiopia in 1909 and leaving in 1926, then returning in 1947 to continue missionary work in the southern part of the country.³

After settling at Kuyera, Toppenberg and the Mission established a church, school, and clinic, and the campus became a youth training facility drawing students from different parts of Ethiopia. By 1952, an early group completed studies at the Kuyera training center.⁴

The first graduates reported for 1952 include the following: Niphtalem Lencha, Allene Tadesse, Hamdberhan Manna, Teruneh Woldesilase, Yoseph Gebremariam, Solomon Woldendrias, Beyene Daba, Emanuel Boru, Tesema Negarie, Abebe Motbynor, and Berhanu Negusie.⁵

Toppenberg, who served as the first principal of the training school, concluded his service at Kuyera and returned permanently to the United States in 1952.⁶

Secondary School Development and Early Leaders (1955-1963)

In 1955, the Adventist secondary school was transferred from Akaki (near Addis Ababa) to Kuyera. This transition strengthened Kuyera's role as a national educational center and contributed to steady institutional growth.⁷

During the secondary-school era, the institution benefited from a blend of expatriate and Ethiopian educators and administrators. Individuals identified in historical summaries and institutional recollections include N. L. Tew, Redai Birru, Irene Eide, A. G. Ellquist, Kebede Eshete, Abate Getahun, Alemu Gobeze, Bekele Haye, Abebe Gebre Kidan, Mary Magnusson, and Gladys Martin.⁸

Transition to Junior College and National Service (1964–1975)

As demand for advanced training increased, Kuyera transitioned to junior college status on October 29, 1964. The institution began to offer programs tailored to the needs of the Church and surrounding communities, and students continued to come from different regions of Ethiopia.⁹

In 1975, the college programs at Kuyera were disrupted amid national political changes, resulting in the suspension of academic operations for a period.¹⁰

Reopening, Program Expansion, and Accreditation (1990–1998)

EAC reopened in 1990 and resumed its educational mission by offering two-year programs in agriculture, business, education, and religion. Soon after reopening, the college obtained accreditation clearance from the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA).¹¹

In 1998, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education granted permission and accreditation for diploma programs in business administration, focusing on accounting and management.¹²

Fire, Reconstruction, and Affiliation (1999–2005)

In 1999, a fire caused by faulty electrical wiring destroyed the main administrative building and significantly reduced library holdings and institutional records. The college relocated services temporarily while reconstruction proceeded.¹³

A new Toppenberg Hall was completed by 2002. The two-story facility housed classrooms, offices, the library, and administrative services, enabling the college to consolidate operations on campus.¹⁴

In 2001, EAC entered an affiliation arrangement with the [University of Eastern Africa](#), Baraton (Kenya), and began offering four-year degree programs in accounting, management, and theology. This arrangement, approved by AAA, supported higher-level academic pathways for Adventist students in Ethiopia.¹⁵

The college also pursued government authorization to begin degree-offering programs in business administration and community development and leadership, and it sought an upgrade to senior college status, which was granted on a candidacy basis beginning in January 2005.¹⁶

Programs, Distance Education, and Graduate Study

EAC began offering four-year degree programs in accounting, management, educational planning and management (EDPM), economics, and theology/religion, as well as a diploma program in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The college also gained approval to offer selected distance learning programs in business-related fields.¹⁷

In 2019, the institution reported accreditation by Ethiopia's Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) of the Ministry of Education to offer a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. The MBA program was also approved by the Adventist Accrediting Association.¹⁸

Affiliated Schools and Institutional Vision

In addition to its tertiary programs, EAC maintains affiliated schools, including high school (academy), elementary, and junior secondary levels. The campus also supports an overseas school for children of missionaries and other residents as an auxiliary department.¹⁹

Institutional planning discussions in 2021 included proposals to expand TVET offerings and introduce additional degrees such as community health, information technology, electrical engineering, and MBA specializations in finance, marketing, and development studies. The same discussions envisioned a transition toward university status and construction of new facilities on farmland across the highway from the existing campus.²⁰

Administration

As reported in institutional listings for 2021, governance and administration included a Board of Trustees chaired by Tadesse Adugna (chair) and Safawo Gullo (secretary). The administrative team was listed as follows: President Safawo Gullo; Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Abraham Dalu; Vice President for Student Affairs Feyisa Woya; Vice President for Financial Affairs Pradeep Tudu; Treasurer Senberu Bullo; Registrar Tadesse Mumicha; Director of Human Resources Gemedo Dale; Graduate Program Coordinator Desta Obse; Director of Distance Education Bekele Wolebo; and Director of TVET Leta Geda.²¹²¹

Significance

From its beginnings as a youth training school at Kuyera, Ethiopia Adventist College has contributed to the preparation of SDA Church workers and professionals for service in Ethiopia. Through periods of growth, disruption, rebuilding, and program expansion, EAC has continued to position Adventist education as a partner to mission, community development, and national progress.

SOURCES

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Ethiopia Adventist College. Administrative roster and institutional summaries (as cited in the draft narrative, 2021).

Ethiopia Adventist College Photo Archive. "Fire Incident and Loss of Records." 1999. Unpublished.

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Toppenberg, V. E. *Africa Has My Heart*. Self-published, 2013.

NOTES

1. The introductory description is based on the draft narrative supplied by the author and institutional summaries cited in later notes.
2. E. I. Brown, *Chronology of Seventh-day Adventist Education 1872–1972* (Washington, DC: General Conference Department of Education, 1972), 95; V. E. Toppenberg, *Africa Has My Heart* (self-pub., 2013), 135–137.
3. Toppenberg, *Africa Has My Heart*, 135–137.
4. Ibid.
5. Brown, *Chronology of Seventh-day Adventist Education*, 95; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1952), 238.
6. Toppenberg, *Africa Has My Heart*, 147.
7. Brown, *Chronology of Seventh-day Adventist Education*, 95.
8. Institutional recollections and staff lists supplied in the draft narrative (unpublished).
9. Brown, *Chronology of Seventh-day Adventist Education*, 95.
10. Ethiopia Adventist College, internal institutional summary (draft narrative supplied), noting disruption of college programs in 1975.
11. Ethiopia Adventist College, internal institutional summary (draft narrative supplied), noting reopening in 1990; Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA), accreditation clearance (as cited in the draft narrative).

12. Ethiopian Ministry of Education, accreditation permission for diploma programs (as cited in the draft narrative, 1998).
13. Ethiopia Adventist College Photo Archive, "Fire Incident and Loss of Records," 1999 (unpublished).
14. Ethiopia Adventist College Photo Archive, "Toppenberg Hall Reconstruction," 2002 (unpublished).
15. Ethiopia Adventist College, internal institutional summary (draft narrative supplied), affiliation with the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, and AAA approval (2001).
16. Ethiopia Adventist College, internal institutional summary (draft narrative supplied), government permission for degree programs and senior college candidacy (2000–2007).
17. Ethiopia Adventist College, internal program listings (draft narrative supplied).
18. Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA), Ministry of Education, accreditation for MBA (2019), as cited in the draft narrative; Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA), program approval (2020), as cited in the draft narrative.
19. Ethiopia Adventist College, internal institutional summary (draft narrative supplied).
20. Ethiopia Adventist College, internal planning discussions (draft narrative supplied, 2021).
21. Ethiopia Adventist College, administrative roster (draft narrative supplied, 2021).

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