



Uruguay Adventist Academy Portico in 2017.

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Uruguay Adventist Academy

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The Uruguay Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista de Uruguay or IAU) is an institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide educational network, and it operates in the ecclesiastical field that belongs to the Uruguay Union of Churches Mission (União Uruguiaia or UU). The academy is on Route 5 at Kilometer 33.5 in the

town of Progreso at Zip Code 90300 in the city and department of Canelones, Oriental Republic of Uruguay.¹

The nearly 80-year-old institution is an academy that offers initial, primary, and secondary education that is focused on Biblical-Christian values in addition to providing boarding school for students. The academy provides cultural diversity as it accepts boarding students from many places in South America including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru as well as students from all the regions of Uruguay.

The present IAU property covers an area of 66 hectares, and there are six buildings scattered throughout the campus. This entire structure is available to its 284 students, including 108 who are in primary school and 176 in secondary school. The IAU has a total of 61 staff members of whom 26 are teachers.²

Developments that Led to the Establishment of the School

The educational work in Uruguay began with the work of pioneers such as Pastor Joseph William Westphal, who in 1919, mentioned the need to establish a school near Canelones. Another pioneer was Julio Ernst, who in the late 1930s, wrote a letter to the Austral Union Conference (now the Argentina Union Conference), suggesting the opening of a secondary school in Uruguay. Then, the Austral Union Conference consulted the SAD, and they voted on January 1, 1931, not to authorize this initiative for a school until the membership was large enough to provide adequate support to the educational project.³ This happened because, at that time, the good progress of the Adventist work in the country “was slowed down due to atheism and the religious indifference of the population.”⁴

However, ten years after the SAD vote, in 1941, the Adventist Church in Uruguay exceeded 1,000 members, and in all its territory, there were 13 organized churches.⁵ During this period, the church youth who wanted an Adventist education had to travel a little more than 600 km to River Plate Junior College (today River Plate Adventist University) that was located on Entre Ríos in the Argentine Republic. Thus, in 1942, Pastor Enrique Joseph Westphal (the son of J. W. Westphal), then president of the Uruguay Mission (Missão Uruguay or MU, now the Uruguay Union of Churches Mission), seeing the Adventist youth needs, promoted the idea of having an educational institution with boarding school in the country. As a result, on June 2, 1942, Mission leaders planned the creation of a secondary school in Uruguay.⁶

In this context, in the following year, the Austral Union Conference, on February 4, 1943, voted to donate m\$n 65,000 (pesos, Argentina national currency, approximately US\$ 15,330.19 at the time)⁷ in order to purchase the property to establish the academy in Uruguay. Then, a special commission was established for the Adventist Academy that comprised the Board of Directors members plus Brothers Eugenio Bergara, Arturo Beskow, Humberto Cairus, Luisa de Beskow, Julio Gerber, Samuel Alberro, Pedro Cairus, and Conrado Uria. Thomas Steen and Ellis R. Maas were appointed directors.⁸ This commission would be in charge of finding the ideal place for the new school.

Foundation of the School

The search for the school's property was brief. It ended when a group of the MU designated commission, traveling from the Juanicó Station along the Canelones-Progreso Route, saw a property and on May 26, 1943, decided to buy it.⁹ This land was located in the city of Progreso that was less than an hour from the capital Montevideo at a distance of approximately 35 km. The property had around 100 acres of land (404,686 m²), considered ideal for the educational project.¹⁰ Finally, on September 14, the institution was named Uruguay Adventist Academy, and on October 4 of the same year, the purchase of the land was concluded. That's why October 4 is considered the true date Uruguay Adventist Academy was established.¹¹

Directed first by Thomas Steen, the academy was inaugurated on March 27, 1944, with 21 students.¹² Steen came from River Plate College to oversee both the academic program and the construction work. The place where the school was established already offered an entire natural infrastructure with great varieties of fruit trees and immense gardens.¹³ Already in its second year of operation, the school had a new building where the administrative offices and the male dormitories were located. The girls lived in one of the original buildings already on the property.¹⁴ The original goal of the educational project was to provide for the youth of the Church a school that would meet their integral development needs including serving non-Adventist children living in the region. The purpose of the early leaders was to better serve society through Christian education.

History of the School

In 1945, within just one year being inaugurated, the IAU already had 59 boarding students and a total of 72 enrolled students.¹⁵ Around 1946, the LM Stump report called attention to the location and quality of the Academy's construction. According to Stump, the facilities were among the finest ones in the Division. Yet, although the expectations from the management were good, the living conditions of students were far from ideal in those first months. However, ongoing renovations were carried out, and improvements were made for the Academy and its students. The growth came little by little. Although the Academy had been authorized since 1944 to offer complete secondary school education, it was decided to start new grades (classes) as the demand warranted it. Thus, only in 1947, the IAU started to offer full secondary education.¹⁶ Still, in this last year, the first class of Uruguay Adventist Academy graduated.¹⁷

Around 1950, the facilities of the female dormitory, the cafeteria, and the kitchen were inaugurated.¹⁸ At that time, 114 students were enrolled, with 94 in secondary school and the others in other levels.¹⁹ As construction continued, a third floor was added, and with this, the IAU infrastructure was improved. The new building was completed in 1955, and it had a chapel and very comfortable classrooms. In that same year, they received an official accreditation from the Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Secundaria y Preparatoria del estado Uruguayo [National Council for Secondary and Preparatory Education of the Uruguayan state]. Another important event was the inauguration of "Frutigran" [Uruguay Academy Food Factory] food and bakery factory in 1962. For

several years, this factory was owned by the IAU, and it is where many students worked to earn their scholarships.²⁰

Around the same time, other buildings were renovated to accommodate a cafeteria, kitchen, and laundry room as well as a large bakery. To better serve the students, 10 Dutch cows and about 100 hens were purchased to supply the pantry and meet the kitchen's needs. Academically, notable progress was made since several students had already completed secondary school and some of them had enrolled to continue their studies on River Plate Junior College.²¹

Since its foundation, Uruguay Adventist Academy has tried to promote an educational process based on Christian values that contribute to the formation of citizens willing to serve family and society. Thus, the Academy works to provide for students spiritual values and the development of a social conscience aligned with an integral education of quality.²² As a result, many of the IAU students later have become influential leaders in the denomination, a fact recalled with emotion by Robert G. Wearner, who served as a teacher from 1955 to 1965 at the IAU.²³ As the school grew in the following two decades, its participation in society increased through various activities, including the "Escuela Bíblica de Vacaciones" ["Christian Summer School for Children"] in a partnership between church and school. In 1967, 90 children participated in this project. In addition to this summer school, a Bible school was organized in the school's chapel.²⁴

Due to the growth of the educational institution over the next two decades, other changes were made in the structural part of the school. On March 26, 1983, the classroom and administration building were inaugurated, coinciding with the 40th anniversary celebration of the start of the academy's activities.²⁵ Later, in 1988, construction of a building for teaching workshops in technical areas such as carpentry, mechanics, electricity, sewing, cooking, and typing was completed. In addition, in 1991, the construction of a new male dormitory was completed. All of these projects came true thanks to the donations from the Swedish government and ADRA International.²⁶

As part of the IAU's growth program, in 2001, the cornerstone of the Gymnasium Auditorium was laid, and it was opened in 2003.²⁷ At that time (2008), the school had about 197 high school students and 29 teachers.²⁸ Thus, as IAU continued its constant purpose of testifying for Christ and serving society, on October 25 and 26, 2013, the celebrations to commemorate the IAU 70th anniversary took place. Several government officials attended as well as the mayors of Canelones, Maldonado, San José, and Paysandú and educational leaders.²⁹ Thus, it attracted the attention of important authorities of the region and in the country.

During 2015-2019, the entire structure of the school went through a renovation process. This included the reconstruction of the buildings and the environment's remodeling. In 2015, the internal paving of the institution's roads was done, and in the following year, the female dormitory was renovated and the library was expanded. All this was done so that the students could have the best possible conditions to continue their

education attaining the physical, mental and moral values offered in the institution.³⁰

Historical Role of the School

Until 1958 and for approximately 15 years, the only Adventist church that existed in the entire department of Canelones was the academy's church. Because of this, the IAU accepted the challenge of evangelizing nearby cities and planting new churches. In that sense, many missionary works were carried out in the cities around the educational institution. Several groups of new Adventists were organized, and at last, the building of a large new church revealed the good work done by the IAU community.³¹

Another factor that promoted IAU's great influence on society was the Frutigran factory [Uruguay Academy Food Factory] created and managed by the IAU. Through the work performed in this place, many students were able to complete their studies. This fact led to the establishment of a great bond between the management of the school and the student's families.³² By giving many young people the opportunity to study, the academy contributed to the personal, professional, and religious formation and edification of many lives.

With its focus always on a comprehensive education that benefits students in their physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects, the IAU has sought to maintain continuous contact with the community.³³ For the IAU, community service goes beyond educational work. For this reason, on December 23, 2016, teachers and students distributed more than 1,000 kilos of food. The "Más amor en Navidad" ["More love on Christmas"] campaign was successfully completed in partnership with the SAC Sports Club.³⁴

And after several decades of dedication and service to the education of young people and the transformation of Uruguayan society, in 2013, the IAU celebrated 70 years of institutional existence.³⁵ Soon after, during the Academy's commemorative celebrations of its 75th anniversary, the Minister of Education and Culture of Uruguay, María Julia Muñoz, visited the Academy's facilities to provide the government's recognition of the school's contribution to society. The event took place on October 19, 2018, and had as its slogan, "Educating in values, transforming lives" acknowledging the participation of many students, parents, professionals, and authorities from the region.³⁶

The history of the Uruguay Adventist Academy, now an institution serving for almost 80 years, testifies that the institutional mission has been developed following the Biblical principles of Adventist education. This educational model seeks to transmit more than education—that is, it teaches moral and ethical values with the goal of making the light of Christ, the Good Teacher, shine on each student and thus prepare them for this life and eternity.

Chronology of Directors³⁷

Thomas Steen (1944-1946); Isaceo Mateo Vaquer (1946-1947); Samuel Alberro (1948); José Tabuenca (1949-1954); José Bernhardt (1955); David H. Rhys (1956-1960); Isidoro Gerometa (1961-1965); Adolfo Lista Hugo (1966-1972); Ricardo Cardinali (1973-1976); Orlando Ciuffardi (1977); Luis Alfredo Schulz (1978-1983); Nestor Sand (1984-1987); Gustavo Laco (1988-1991); Juan Carlos Bentancor (1992-1994); Felipe Juez (1995); Carlos Mesa (1996-2000); Jorge De Souza Matías (2001-2007); Silvia Ernst (2008-2010); Flavio Pasini Machado (2011-2019); Mathías Mosconi (2020-present).³⁸

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38. More information about the Uruguay Adventist Academy can be found on their website at <https://iau.edu.uy/> or on their social networks on Facebook: [@InstitutoAdventistadelUruguay](#), Instagram: [@institutoiau](#), Twitter: [@InstitutoIAU](#), and YouTube: [Instituto Adventista del Uruguay](#).

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