Amazonia Adventist College

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Amazonia Adventist College (Faculdade Adventista da Amazônia, or FAAMA) is a school for elementary, high school, and college education that offers day and boarding school. It belongs to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is part of the worldwide Adventist education network. It operates in the territory of the North Brazil Union Mission (União Norte Brasileira, or UNB), located on Augusto Meira Filho highway, kilometer 1, zip code 68795-000, Paricatuba neighborhood, municipality of Benevides, state of Pará, Brazil.

FAAMA is the fifth Adventist institution of higher education in Brazil and the first in the northern region. The college offers courses in nursing, pedagogy, and theology. The theology course makes FAAMA one of the regional headquarters of the Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia (Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary, or SALT-SAD). The FAAMA campus comprises a total of 105 hectares and includes the following structures: library, sports complex, higher education building, basic education building, cafeteria, 23 houses for employees, and male and female dormitories. The institution serves around 887 students. These students are assisted by 203 employees, among which are 49 teachers and 154 staff members. Of these, 16 are church employees and 11 are accredited pastors.

Development that Led to the School’s Establishment

The Amazon region in northern Brazil was visited by Oliver Montgomery, president of the South American Division (SAD), in 1920. As a result of this visit, the creation of the Lower Amazonas Mission (Missão Baixo Amazonas, or
Possibly the most striking evangelistic work done in the Brazilian Amazon region was carried out by the couple Leo and Jessie Halliwell. In 1928 Pastor Brown and his family returned to the United States, and Leo Halliwell was called to preside over this administrative unit in the city of Belém, Pará. Beginning at that time, the medical missionary work and the spread of Adventism developed rapidly in northern Brazil. The first mission launch built by the Halliwell couple, Lumeiro I (Light Bearer I), enabled the spread of evangelism and medical assistance along the Amazon River and its tributaries. It was during this time that the first Adventist school in the region was established in February 1936, in the city of Maués, state of Amazonas. That same year, UNB was created to direct the Adventist work in the region and it caused the work to expand even more.

In the 1940s, the evangelism spread to the Maués indigenous tribe, in the region of the municipality of Maués, in Amazonas. The Lower Amazonas Mission began there with a school that offered classes during the day and in the evening, and also offered treatment against worms, serving mainly the children of the tribe. The missionaries often suffered opposition and infuriated Indians arrived at the doors of their homes, unhappy by the missionaries’ presence. After three years, things started to change. The missionaries’ housing improved, and there was a shed that was used for school classes and for Sabbath School. After years of effort, 15 people were baptized, bringing the group of Adventists at that place to 35, with 58 enrolled in Sabbath School.

Until the beginning of the 1960s, there were only primary schools in the territory served by UNB and these operated under the authority of local churches. Families interested in their children receiving further education in Adventist schools had to send them to boarding schools in the states of Pernambuco and São Paulo. In order to help Adventist families in this regard, in 1961 the Ginásio Grão Pará (Pará Academy), now known as Grão Pará Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista Grão-Pará, or IAGP) was established. Since its establishment, is has offered complete elementary and high school education. The school was authorized by the Ministério da Educação e Cultura (Ministry of Education and Culture) on April 19, 1961, and is considered the first Adventist academy in Brazil to offer high school as a day school.

With the growth and expansion of the Adventist work in the state of Pará, it became necessary to build an Adventist boarding school in that state. In 1973 UNB leadership commissioned brothers Erwino and Lindolpho Gutzeit, Adventist farmers, to search for land in the region of federal highway BR-230—known as Transamazônica (Trans-Amazon highway)—to host an Adventist boarding school. The land found by the Gutzeit brothers was located in the region of the municipality of Uruará. In July 1977, UNB received the document from the Brazil National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária do Brasil, or INCRA) that gave it the right to occupy the land. Construction work on the boarding school began in 1977, and on April 18, 1978, the Agro-Industrial Adventist Trans-Amazon Academy (Instituto Adventista Transamazônico Agroindustrial, or IATAI) was inaugurated.

The growth of the work, including the number of Adventist educational institutions in the northern states, continued in the following decades. In 2003, 67 years after the first school was established in the municipality of Maués, in Amazonas (Amazon state), UNB had 16,800 students distributed in 65 educational institutions. These institutions include 48 elementary schools and 17 academies, three of which are boarding schools. But that was still not enough to meet the educational demand. There remained a need for an Adventist institution that offered higher education in this region of the country. With this in mind, the union formed a commission to study the viability of establishing a higher education center to serve students who lived in the states of Pará, Amapá, Maranhão, Amazonas, Roraima, Rondônia, and Acre.

**Foundation of the School**

In 2002 Belem Adventist Hospital (Hospital Adventista de Belém, or HAB) offered its property for sale in the municipality of Benevides, 30 kilometers from Belém. This property, called Fazenda Asa Branca (White Wing Farm), belonged to a Japanese man named Nobuyoshi Muto, and had been purchased in 1998 by the hospital for the construction of a healthy living clinic. However, the clinic project had been postponed. In 2002, with the need to modernize all of its hospital equipment and expand its facilities, the hospital decided to sell the farm and use the money for its expansion. However, the land remained unsold.

Pastor Izeas Cardoso dos Santos, the UNB president, suggested to the hospital administrators that perhaps God’s plan was not to sell the land, but to save it for a greater purpose. Then he formally asked for the property to be donated for the construction of an Adventist college. In response to the request, the HAB steering committee met and decided to donate to the union the 105-hectare property located on kilometer 1 of Augusto Meira Filho highway, in Benevides.

Before the initial moves to create the college, the SAD administrators sent a commission to Pará with the goal of studying the possibility of establishing a new college. The following factors were considered: 1) UNB was the division’s only field without an institution of higher learning; 2) the Adventist Church was growing rapidly in the UNB territory, this being the largest union in South America in number of members, of which 65 percent were youth; 3)
there was a great need to prepare the youth to serve the Church; 4) Adventist higher education institutions in Brazil are located at a great distance from the northern part of the country; 5) church members in northern Brazil are eager for the establishment of a higher education institution in their territory; and, 6) the 105-hectare farm donated for the establishment of a school was a very suitable location for the construction of a boarding school.15

In view of these findings and after careful analysis, the SAD commission recommended the establishment of an institution of higher education in the state of Pará. Soon UNB appointed a construction committee and presented an architectural plan and a financial plan, the latter based on subsidies from all of its fields.16 Another committee visited the site in November 2004, in order to reaffirm the conditions and the plan to be carried out to establish the higher education institution. On December 8, 2004, when UNB had been in existence for 68 years, the cornerstone of FAAMA was laid. The ceremony was attended by several authorities, both civil and religious.17

Soon after the ceremony, the construction of the first dormitory began. At the same time, the roads were marked out and the construction of blocks for paving began. In October 2007, seeing that the project was already advanced, UNB leadership asked SAD to request an inspection visit from the General Conference. At the end of January 2008, a preliminary survey commission made up of GC, SAD, and UNB members, made a preliminary assessment of the project. Representing the General Conference were Professors Nancy and Werner Vyhmeister, from Andrews University, with the specific goal of studying the viability of implementing a regional SALT headquarters in FAAMA. At the end of its work, the commission proposed the creation of an institution that encompassed elementary, high school, and higher education.18

The idea was that the college would first offer the theology course and later offer others, such as pedagogy, accounting, computer science, or even courses in the health area. The academic preparations started in 2008 and 2009, with the support of SALT-SAD. The four-year theology course was proposed to be similar to that of the Faculdade Adventista da Bahia (Bahia Adventist College, or FADBA), which already had recognition and accreditation from the government of Brazil and SALT-SAD. In May 2009, UNB leaders met with the Ministério da Educação do Brasil (Ministry of Education of Brazil) to establish the schedule of courses to be offered in the elementary school and high school.19

The inauguration of the new institution, named Faculdade Adventista da Amazônia, or FAAMA (Amazonia Adventist College) took place on August 16, 2009. The ceremony was attended by around 2,000 people, including civil and religious authorities, and pastors from UNB and UnEB.20 At the time, the UNB president mentioned that the creation of FAAMA would “enable many young people from the North to study at the institution.” In addition, it was expected that the training of a generation of workers familiar with the local culture would promote great regional development of the Church.21 Since it was established, FAAMA’s mission has been “to promote, through Christian education, the integral development of the student, forming autonomous citizens, committed to the well-being of the community and the country with God.”22

History of the Institution

The FAAMA construction project was well designed, and it would take some time for all buildings to be completed. During the construction process, the school operated with the facilities that were already completed. Even in the smallest details the institution sought to fulfill its role of evangelization. While FAAMA was under construction, some people were converted to Adventism through their interaction with the contractor and other construction workers who took advantage of the project to evangelize those involved. Other employees and people in the neighborhood also accepted the message, and about 140 people were baptized in 2009 due to these contacts.23

In the first year of operation, 2010, one-third of the architectural project was complete, including the administration building, classrooms, a 400-seat chapel, the male dormitory, swimming pool, and two sports courts. At that point in the construction, it was possible to start classes, which began with eight teachers and 79 employees for other functions. At this time there was room for 50 high school students and 55 students for the Bachelor of Theology degree.24 The first FAAMA theology class began with 58 students. These students came from 12 different states in Brazil, and two of them were indigenous people who intended to return to their communities after graduation. In the first high school class, there were 69 students. The theology class had teachers such as Pastor Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, Pastor Alberto Timm, and UNB leaders.25

One of the most important aspects of an educational institution is the library where a student can learn to do research. The library at FAAMA has an interesting history. It was inaugurated in 2010 and was named after the American businesswoman Judith A. Thomas. Mrs. Thomas donated R$1,000,000 (about US$250,000) for the construction of the building, whose total area is 2,000 square meters, and which took six months to complete. Judith Thomas also donated about R$50,000 (about US$12,500) for air conditioning the library. Besides the library, the building also houses a museum named after Pastor Leo Halliwell, where the Luzeiro I (Light Bearer I) is featured.26
Other notable events of FAAMA include the following. In July 2011, the institution taught the first theology studies course which was designed to be a short continuing education course for the 55 employees and administrators of the Adventist Church who work in northern Brazil. Subjects covered by the classes were Biblical interpretation, pastoral counseling, fundamentals of Christian education, and history of Christianity. The courses showed the Church’s concern for the theological preparation of its employees. Another important date was August 31, 2011, when the Ellen G. White Study Center at FAAMA was inaugurated, in order to strengthen the prophetic identity of the Church throughout the northern region of Brazil.

FAAMA also hosted the first UNB Congress of Educators (Congresso de Educadores da UNB), from June 27 to 30, 2012. Nearly a thousand teachers were present and were instructed on how to align the missionary, administrative, pedagogical, and financial procedures of the Adventist education network. They participated in seminars, debates, classes, and workshops. In 2012, FAAMA was still in the process of adapting and developing, but it was increasingly reaching more students. That year, 421 students were enrolled at the institution. In 2013 the college community participated in an evangelistic movement that included the mass distribution of the DVD A Última Esperança (The Last Hope), with a study focused on the meaning of the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. On this occasion, 700 FAAMA students gathered on the Augusto Meira Filho highway to give to the drivers a missionary kit that, in addition to the DVD, contained the book A Grande Esperança (The Great Hope) and a leaflet from TV Novo Tempo (Hope Channel).

The year 2013 was also marked by the graduation of the first FAAMA theology class. On that occasion, 46 students graduated with a degree in theology from the college in northern Brazil. The religious ceremony took place at the campus chapel, and graduation took place at the Adventist Church of Marco, in the city of Belem, with the presence of about 1,500 people. The following year, with the goal of inaugurating a medical course in the future, FAAMA and the Belem Adventist Hospital signed an agreement with the Pará State University (Universidade Estadual do Pará, or UEPA), to arrange for ten professionals to study for the master’s degree in medicine, enabling them to act as teachers in the medicine course to be implemented at FAAMA.

Also, in 2014, the postgraduate courses in educational management, financial management, and studies in theology were inaugurated, and a graduation took place in December. The year 2014 also marked completion of a new physical space for higher education in the library building, which was inaugurated on December 4. During the institution’s anniversary celebration, in November 2014, the college board presented the plans for beginning the pedagogy course and the installation of a medical course at FAAMA. The installation of this course would be accompanied by the construction of a teaching hospital, to serve both the FAAMA community and the population of the Benevides region. The year was crowned with the graduation of another theology class, with 46 graduates. In this group was the theology student Douglas Silva, Brazil’s first deaf Adventist pastor. Pastor Silva currently works in the Belem Adventist Hospital.

One of the courses to be opened after accreditation was received was nursing, starting in 2021. FAAMA has been preparing for the opening of this course and, on February 18, 2020, inaugurated the complex of laboratories that will be used in the training of missionary nurses. The complex has two laboratories, a room dedicated to anatomy studies, and another practical teaching room for childbirth simulation and cardiac arrests, among other medical situations.

### Historical Role of the School

Since its beginning, FAAMA has impressed its students and the community around them with its missionary and educational commitment. To fulfill its role, the theology classes in the college are divided into two work teams: the boarding students, who help with the pastoral activities of the college congregation; and the day students, who assist Adventist congregations in the region. During the third-year internship, these students carry out evangelistic campaigns for 90 days (from September to November), contributing to the institution’s evangelistic mission and obtaining experience that helps in their pastoral formation.
In addition, the institution continues to fulfill its goals in a very integrated manner with the front line of the SDA Church through the participation of students in actions such as Evangelismo da Semana Santa (Holy Week Evangelism); Expo-Saúde (Expo-Health, similar to the health fair); Impacto Esperança (Hope Impact); small groups; the event Quebrando o Silêncio (Breaking the Silence); and Mutirão de Natal (Christmas Taskforce). FAAMA also organizes recreation and socialization events, and it supports the activities of the Adventurers and Pathfinder Clubs. All the efforts that are employed by the management, employees, and students in these activities, have the goal of enhancing the social and spiritual well-being of students, employees, and the local and regional community.

FAAMA also supports initiatives to restore people's dignity. This is the case of the Projeto de Desenvolvimento e Assistência Social Dona Flor (Mrs. Flor Development and Social Assistance Project, or Prodasf), and the project Reescrevendo Nossa História (Rewriting Our History). The first offers legal, psychological, and medical-dental care in communities in the countryside of Pará. The second works with the reinsertion of released prisoners into society. The two projects were created by the state judge Wanderley de Oliveira and also have the support of the Federation of Adventist Entrepreneurs of Brazil (Federação dos Empreendedores Adventistas do Brasil, or FE), Pará Socio-Educational Service Foundation (Fundaçao de Atendimento Socioeducativo do Pará, or Fasepa), and other entities. With the goal of the social reintegration of ex-detainees, FAAMA hosted the First National Symposium on Prison Mission from November 2 to 4, 2018. In this context, FAAMA has been recognized for its religious and social role in transforming lives.

**What Remains to Be Done to Fulfill the School’s Mission**

Since FAAMA started operating in 2010, the institution has experienced rapid growth and many achievements. From the earliest preparations for its creation until today’s achievements, divine Providence assisted in overcoming many difficulties so the institution could become an Adventist educational institution. Other difficulties persist, including the lack of resources and the availability of Adventist professionals to work in northern Brazil. In addition, the institution has been challenged by the growth of distance learning (EaD), since its main focus of work is on in-person learning.

Despite the difficulties, the institution has implemented actions to overcome these and other challenges. Among them is the training and qualification of employees to offer excellent distance courses, reaching more students from other regions of the state and even the country. There are plans to invest in the implementation of new courses; strengthen the areas of research and publication; and expand the infrastructure, making it possible to house more boarding students. In the next five years, FAAMA plans to improve the nursing course that is being started and implement the medical course.

Thus, the difficulties do not prevent new dreams and plans, because the biggest lesson learned from the history of this educational institution is that the work of God is advancing, even in the midst of the greatest challenges. The seed of the gospel, when planted and cared for, with prayer, faith, and work, will always bear good fruit. FAAMA is the result of the effort previously exhibited by the tireless pioneers, men and women of God, who did everything they could to advance the Adventist work. To continue this legacy, the school leadership has the firm purpose of staying on the path and following the example of these pioneers, and thus expanding the reach of its educational and evangelistic mission in northern Brazil.

**Chronology of Directors**


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**NOTES**


2. Josafá da Silva Oliveira (FAAMA Ellen G. White Study Center Director), e-mail message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 25, 2019.?


10. “MBA: Três Anos Abençoados” [MBA: Tree blessed years], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], no. 10, year 71, October 1976, 21.?

11. Jesualdo Antônio de Sousa Monteiro, “Instituto Adventista Transamazônico Agro-industrial” [Agro-Industrial Adventist Trans-Amazon Academy], (Monograph, Brazil College, n/d), 2, 4-5.?

12. M. D. Costa, *História de Sede Regional do SALT na Amazônia Brasileira* [History of SALT Regional Campus in the Brazilian Amazon], Faculdade Adventista da Amazônia [Amazonia Adventist College], 2012.?

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Vanderlei José Vianna and Gedeon Alves dos Reis, “Lançada pedra fundamental da Faculdade Adventista do norte do Brasil” [The cornerstone of the Adventist College in the north Brazil is laid], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], no. 1, year 100 (January 2005): 27.

18. Josafá da Silva Oliveira (FAAMA Ellen G. White Study Center Director), e-mail message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 25, 2019.

19. Ibid.

20. Vanderlei José Vianna, “Terceira faculdade de teologia adventista do Brasil será inaugurada em 2010” [Third Adventist Theology College in Brazil will be inaugurated in 2010], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], no. 1204, year 103 (September 2008): 34.


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23. Vanderlei José Vianna, “Terceira faculdade de teologia adventista do Brasil será inaugurada em 2010” [Third Adventist Theology College in Brazil will be inaugurated in 2010], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], no. 1216, year 104 (September 2009): 29; Josafá da Silva Oliveira (FAAMA Ellen G. White Study Center Director), e-mail message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 25, 2019.

24. “Faama inicia as aulas de Teologia” [Faama starts theology classes], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], no. 1222, year 105, March 2010, 32.


27. Felipe Lemos, “Para não perder a visão” [In order to not lose sight], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], no. 1241, year 106 (October 2011): 29.


32. Josafá da Silva Oliveira (FAAMA Ellen G. White Study Center Director), e-mail message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 25, 2019.
"The Holy Week Harvest and Sowing Evangelism is a very special time to present Jesus and the life we find in Him through the Word of God. The purpose of the evangelism is to remember the sacrifice, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of humanity." Seventh-day Adventist Church (Brazil) Website, "Semana Santa Evangelismo de Colheita e Semeadura" [Holy Week Harvesting and Sowing Evangelism], accessed on February 4, 2020, https://bit.ly/2iMW0ue.

2. "The Health Fair is a one, two or more days event, open to the public of all ethnicities and beliefs, without cost or profit. It is usually organized in public places such as gymnasiums, schools, parks, squares and malls. The community is invited to participate and receive the benefits of the tests and instructions." Luiz Fernando Sella and Daniela Tiemi Kanno, Manual da Feira de Saúde [Health Fair Manual] (South American Division, 2015), 15.


4. "Breaking the Silence is an educational and prevention project against abuse and domestic violence promoted annually by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in eight countries in South America, (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) since 2002." Seventh-Day Adventist Church (Brazil) Website, “Quebrando o Silêncio” [Breaking the Silence], accessed on February 4, 2020, https://bit.ly/2WoDfIW.

5. "The ‘Mutirão de Natal’ [Christmas Taskforce] is an initiative that was born in an Adventist Church in Brazil, in 1994. The idea was to gather food and clothing to deliver to people in need during the holidays at the end of the year, especially during Christmas.” Seventh-day Adventist (Brazil) Website, “Mutirão de Natal” [Christmas Taskforce] accessed on February 4, 2020, https://bit.ly/2WeKMW.


8. "The Pathfinders Club is made up of “boys and girls aged 10 to 15 years old, from different social classes, color, religion. They meet, in general, once a week to learn to develop talents, skills, perceptions and a taste for nature.” These boys and girls “are thrilled with outdoor activities. They like camping, hiking, climbing, exploring the woods and caves. They know how to cook outdoors, making a fire without matches.” Besides, they demonstrate “skill with discipline through drill commands and have their creativity awakened by manual arts. They also fight the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.” Seventh-day Adventist Church (Brazil) Website, “Quem somos” [Who we are], accessed on February 4, 2020, http://bit.ly/2PDRq7h.

9. Josafá da Silva Oliveira (FAAMA Ellen G. White Study Center Director), e-mail message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 25, 2019.


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13. Ibid.


15. More information about FAAMA can be obtained on the website: http://faama.com.br/, or on social networks: YouTube: FAAMA - Faculdade Adventista da Amazônia [Amazonia Adventist College]; Facebook: @faamaofficial; e Instagram: faama_edu.