



Adventist University of West Africa

Photo courtesy of Emmanuel Kollie.

# Adventist University of West Africa (AUWA)

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The Adventist University of West Africa (AUWA) is located in Schiefflin town, Robertsfield highway, Margibi county, Monrovia, Liberia. AUWA lies on 100 acres of land equidistant between the International Airport and Monrovia city. The university was established on August 7, 2003, when it received its charter from the Liberian government. It has been accredited by the Adventist Accrediting Association (since 2013), National Commission on Higher Education, Liberia, and the Liberian Board for Nursing and Midwifery. AUWA is member of the Association of Liberian Universities.<sup>1</sup>

## Early Establishment

AUWA was established on August 7, 2003, when Charles Taylor was the president of Liberia. The university was incorporated on September 8, 2003, by the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through an act of the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia. The executive committee of the Liberian Mission of Seventh-day Adventists under the chairmanship of Pastor James M. Golay, mission president, voted to open the university on October 23, 2009.<sup>2</sup>

AUWA began operation with a limited number of two-year associate degree programs at 120 Camp Johnson Road, Monrovia, its temporary site, in August 2010, with Dr. Clifford Pitt as the first university president. Dr. Pitt left in 2011, and Dr. Shelton Beedoe was the acting president from 2011 to 2012. Prof. K. Olusola Ogunwenmo was appointed president in 2012, a position he held until 2018 when he went on permanent return to his home at Babcock University in Nigeria. This led to the appointment of the current president, Dr. Emmanuel G. M. Kollie, who took over the leadership of the university on July 26, 2018.<sup>3</sup>

On February 21, 2011, the university began enrolling students under the leadership of the first dean for Admissions and Records, Mrs. Glory I. Baysah. One hundred and five students were enrolled and classes began March 1, 2011. The pioneer academic administration was as follows:

Dr. Clifford Pitt, President

Dr. Shelton Beedoe, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Pastor John O. Baysah, Dean, College of Theology

Elder Sawyer Payne, Dean, College of Education

Mrs. Erhuvwukorotu S. Kollie, Dean, College of Nursing

Elder Alexander Quaye, Dean, College of Business and Public Administration

The academic program started in the following areas: Theology, Education, Nursing, Accounting, Economics, and Public Administration. The first finance manager was Elder Abraham Naigawu.<sup>4</sup>

## Further Development

On March 27, 2012, the university conducted the groundbreaking ceremony on its 100-acre permanent site. Pastor Emmanuel G. M. Kollie and Pastor Amos Horace organized the clearing and preparation of the site for the ceremony.<sup>5</sup> The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by Elder Seth Badu, treasurer of the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Maryland, USA, and Prof. James K. Makinde the vice-chancellor of Babcock University in Nigeria, among other dignitaries. Significant monetary donations were made by the dignitaries to the university.<sup>6</sup> By August 2012, the first set of international students from Sierra Leone were enrolled; hence, the opening of the dormitory on the Smythe Road Compound which is owned by the West Africa Union Mission. The first dean for Student Affairs, Mrs. Lenda George, developed the dormitory services.<sup>7</sup>

The Liberian government, through the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), granted the university a full degree charter on March 18, 2013. The Liberian Nursing Board and Midwifery (LNBM) granted accreditation to the nursing program in May 2013. The Adventist Accreditation Association (AAA) offered candidacy status on October 9, 2013.<sup>8</sup>

The university relocated to its permanent site in Schiefflin town on March 22-23, 2015. The first graduation was held on June 13-17, 2015, with 50 graduates in Accounting, Business Administration, Economics, Public Administration, Education Guidance, Counseling Psychology, Primary and Secondary Education, Nursing, and Theology.<sup>9</sup>

Student enrollment increased from 206 in 2011 to 518 in early 2014, prior to the Ebola outbreak. The university has since witnessed healthy growth and development with an enrollment increase to 718 in 2015, to 830 at the beginning of 2016, and to 1,045 by 2017. On July 6, 2016, 66 students graduated from the university. Currently, AUWA is upgrading its services by employing improved technology in all its operations and by expanding classroom space and infrastructure.<sup>10</sup>

## Educational Programs

The university operates 17 programs in four colleges: College of Business and Public Administration, College of Humanities, College of Health and Sciences, and College of Nursing. The instruction language is English.

AUWA offers the following Certificates/Diplomas/Degrees:<sup>11</sup>

### *College of Business and Public Administration*

Bachelor of Science: Accounting; Banking and Finance; Business Administration; Criminal Justice; Management; Public Administration

### *College of Humanities*

Bachelor of Arts: Education (Religious Studies); Theology

Bachelor of Science: Education (Accounting, Biology, Management, Public Health)

Bachelor of Education: Primary, Secondary

*College of Health and Sciences*

Bachelor of Science: Biology; Nursing (Maternal and Child Health, Community Health); Public Health

## Contribution and Legacy

By the establishment of AUWA, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is satisfying the need for tertiary education of the Seventh-day Adventists in Liberia. For years many Adventist youth have had difficulty studying at the national university because they were required to attend classes on Sabbath. The advent of AUWA has solved that. AUWA is also making a good contribution to the social reconstruction and recovery of a country coming out 14 years of civil war. Several national leaders have expressed their appreciation for the unique educational role that the university has played since its inception.<sup>12</sup> Former president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, expressed the Liberian government's appreciation to the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the church's contributions to Liberian education by the establishment of the Adventist University of West Africa.<sup>13</sup>

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### SOURCES

"Adventist University of West Africa." in *Directories of Seventh-day Adventist Colleges and Universities*. Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Accrediting Association, 2017-2018. Accessed October 24, 2019, <https://adventistaccreditingassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/directory2017-2018.pdf>

George, Emmanuel K. and A. Oliver. "Ground Breaking Adventist University" on March 27, 2012. Accessed January 11, 2019. <https://archives.adventistworld.org/2012/june/groundbreaking->

"President Sirleaf Worships with Paynesville Central SDA Church." *Front Page Africa*. An International News Paper, May 3, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.allafrica.com>.

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### NOTES

1. "Adventist University of West Africa," in *Directories of Seventh-day Adventist Colleges and Universities* (Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Accrediting Association, 2017-2018), 36, accessed October 24, 2019, <https://adventistaccreditingassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/directory2017-2018.pdf>.
2. In the executive committee meeting minutes of October 23, 2009, the action was taken to formally open the Adventist University of West (AUWA) to the public, AUWA archives, Schiefflin town, Robertsfield highway, Margibi county, Monrovia, Liberia.

3. Pastor (Dr.) James M. Golay, president of the West Africa Union Mission (WAUM), interview by author on January 15, 2019. The university began full operation within the tenure of Pastor Golay's administration of the WAUM. Accordingly, student enrollment started on February 21, 2011. Classes for the university began March 1, 2011.
4. An interview with Dr. Shelton Beedee, the first vice president of Academic Affairs on January 10, 2019. According to Dr. Beedee, the first intake of students were mostly adult Adventist students, in the age range of 25-60 years, who have waited for a very long time to obtain a degree from an Adventist university.
5. This information is provided by Pastor (Dr) Emmanuel G. M. Kollie, acting president of AUWA, 2018.
6. Emmanuel K. George and A. Oliver, "Ground Breaking Adventist University" on March 27, 2012, <https://archives.adventistworld.org/2012/june/groundbreaking-> (Assessed January 11, 2019).
7. Pastor (Dr) James M. Golay, president of the West Africa Union Mission (WAUM), interview by author on January 15, 2019.
8. Ibid.
9. Personal knowledge of the author as the pioneer dean of the College of Health Sciences. The author also served as the sponsor of the first graduating class of AUWA.
10. "Adventist University of West Africa," in *Directories of Seventh-day Adventist Colleges and Universities* (Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Accrediting Association, 2017-2018), 36, accessed October 24, 2019, <https://adventistaccreditingassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/directory2017-2018.pdf>.
11. Ibid.
12. For example, the vice president of the republic, the Honorable Joseph Boakai (both in the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf government and the current administration), served as the guest speaker during the first graduation ceremony of AUWA on June 17, 2015; and Dr. Chief Jewel Howard-Taylor of the current president George Weah's administration, gave the keynote address at the 2017 graduation ceremony. Both affirmed the government's appreciation of AUWA's contributions to national development. Dr. Chief Jewel Howard-Taylor again served as the guest speaker of the graduation ceremony on July 26, 2018.
13. "President Sirleaf Worships with Paynesville Central SDA Church," *Front Page Africa*, An International News Paper, May 3, 2016. Retrieved by author from <http://www.allafrica.com>.

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