Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia, SALT) is a Seventh-day Adventist Church institution responsible for the theological education in the territory of the South American Division. SALT comprises eight regional campuses and one of them operates in the territory of the North Brazil Union Mission. It is known as SALT-FAAMA because it is located in the Faculdade Adventista da Amazônia (FAAMA) (Amazonia Adventist College), at kilometer 1 on Augusto Meira Filho Highway, Zip Code 68795-000, in the Paricatuba neighborhood, in the municipality of Benevides, metropolitan region of the city of Belém, Pará, Brazil. SALT-FAAMA has a campus of around 75 acres and around 25,000 m² of built area. In 2020, it had around 200 students and 10 staff (six pastors, an English teacher, a Portuguese teacher, a psychology teacher, and an administrative secretary).

**Developments that Led to the Institution’s Establishment**

The development of the Adventist work in the north region of Brazil (states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, and Tocantins) began with the visit of Pastor Oliver Montgomery, the then South American Division president. Montgomery traveled throughout the northern territory of the country to investigate the possibilities and trace strategies to establish the Adventist church in that region. As a result, in 1927, the Lower Amazonas Mission (Missão Baixo Amazonas, MBA), currently known as the North Para Conference (Associação Norte do Pará, ANPa) was created. The institution was at first led by Pastor John L. Brown, who was assisted by the canvassers André Gedrath and Hans Mayr.

When created, the Lower Amazonas Mission served the current states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Ceará, Maranhão, Rondônia, Roraima, Pará, and Plaúi. The medical missionaries Léo and Jessie Halliwell significantly contributed to the spread of the Adventist work in this region. The evangelistic and humanitarian work was carried out by Light Bearer Missionary Launch (Lancha Luzeiro), from 1931 to 1956, and in that period, the missionary work was greatly expanded in the northern regions of Brazil.

As a result of the work carried out by the Halliwellis, in February 1936 the first Adventist school was created in the region, in the city of Maués, state of Amazonas. Until then, the north region of the country was served by the East Brazil Union Mission (União Este Brasileira, UEB), currently Southeast Brazil Union Conference (União Sudeste Brasileira, USeB). Due to the extension of the Adventist work in the north of Brazil, which presented managing difficulties, in late 1936, the South American Division decided to create the North Brazil Union Mission (União Norte Brasileira). In 1946, 10 years after the creation of the North Brazil Union Mission, there were already nine organized churches and 922 Adventist members. However, many regions in the vast territory remained unreached and the need for more workers for that field was still great.

Such challenges, however, did not prevent the work from advancing during the 1950s and 1960s. The training of church leaders and members to meet the growing demands of spreading the gospel became an urgent need. The north and northeast regions of Brazil did not have an Adventist higher education institution to meet this need. Adventists who desired to obtain Adventist higher education had to go to Brazil College (Instituto Adventista de Ensino; currently UNASP-SP), in São Paulo, more than 2,500 kilometers from the north of the country. The Church realized that the distance prevented many Adventists who wanted to become pastors from attending Brazil College. It became clear that the church needed a training school for pastors in the north where the Adventist work existed for nearly 35 years. Thus, in 1957, the Northeast Brazil Junior College Theological Seminary (Seminário de Teologia do Educandário Nordestino Adventista, ENA) was established in the state of Pernambuco. Although established in the northeast of the country, the seminary’s location allowed the students from the north to attend. ENA’s theology program offered only the first two years of studies, so the last two years were completed at Brazil College in São Paulo. This system only lasted until 1960, when ENA started to offer the full four-year program.

In 1961, the Lower Amazonas Mission established in its territory the Grão Pará Adventist Institute (Instituto Adventista Grão-Pará, IAGP), the first Adventist educational institution as a day school to offer high school education in Brazil. The inauguration of the Grão Pará Adventist Institute was part of the North Brazil Union Mission educational project to transform the Grão Pará Adventist Institute into a boarding school in the future and establish a theological seminary there. However, when presented to the South American Division, the proposal was considered unfeasible at that time.

With the expansion of theological schools, the South American Division voted for the creation of Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary in 1979, with its rectory in Brasilia, to coordinate all the postgraduate courses offered by the seminaries in the South American territory. This expansion was also reflected in the northeast region of Brazil and, in 1987, ENA Theological Seminary (Seminário de Teologia do ENA) was transferred to Northeast Brazil College (Pernambuco to the Instituto Adventista de Ensino do Nordeste, IAENE), currently Bahia Adventist College (Faculdade Adventista da Bahia, FADB). The transfer was made because the new campus infrastructure was considered better than ENA’s, and the seminary at Northeast Brazil College (now SALT-FADB) could better serve the north and northeast regions as well as to contribute to the work in the southeast of Brazil.

**Founding of the Institution**

The church continued to grow steadily, and in the early 2000s, the possibility of establishing an Adventist higher education institution in the North Brazil Union Mission’s territory was revisited again. In 2002, the North Brazil Union Mission favored the idea of establishing a regional SALT campus. The Union administration board asked Belem Adventist Hospital (Hospital Adventista de Belém, HAB) to donate a piece of land for the school. The Hospital
The South American Division committee held its first meeting with the North Brazil Union Mission and Belem Adventist Hospital administrators on June 5, 2003. In November 2004, a division team visited the site and ratified the previous opinion on the viability of the building project in that place. After the project was approved by a joint decision of the South American Division and the North Brazil Union Mission, the construction work could begin. The cornerstone of the institution that came to be called FAAMA was laid on December 8, 2004. The region’s civil authorities participated in the program, including the Belem deputy mayor and the secretary of education of the municipality of Benevides, as well as the North Brazil Union Mission pastors and the Belem Adventist Hospital administrators. After the ceremony, the construction of the first dormitory, the administrative building, the college building, the avenues, and the manufacture of blocks to pave the streets began.

As the construction progressed, in October 2007, a new inspection of the school plans was requested by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. In January 2008, a General Conference team along with the South American Division and North Brazil Union Mission representatives evaluated the project. On that occasion, the commission approved the establishment of a regional SALT campus in FAAMA, in addition to the high school. The new college was inaugurated on August 16, 2009, in a ceremony attended by administrators and pastors from the North Brazil Union Mission and the South American Division. During the inauguration ceremony, the goal for establishing the institution was highlighted, “to allow young Adventists from the north of Brazil to continue their studies, as well as to help in the training of new workers for the Adventist church in the region.” The school would serve the educational needs of the six conferences and two missions in the North Brazil Union Mission territory, which at that time comprised the states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Maranhão, Rondônia, Roraima, and Pará.

The theology classes started on February 8, 2010. There were 60 students enrolled in the first class. Pastor Angel Manuel Rodríguez, the director of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, taught the first class. In its first year, the seminary began to carry out various research and outreach activities, such as the elaboration and publication of a theological review and the establishment of a study center. At the beginning of its activities, only 40 percent of the FAAMA’s architectural project was ready. However, the academic community already had an administrative building, classrooms, a 400-seat chapel, a male dormitory, a swimming pool, and two sports courts.

Another important ceremony at the beginning of SALT-FAAMA’s activities was the inauguration of the Judith A. Thomas Library, named after the American businesswoman who generously donated US$ 300,000 for the construction of that building and its air conditioning. The library also houses Leo Halliwell’s Museum and has an exhibition of the missionary boat Luzeiro I (Light Bearer I). Mrs. Thomas was present at the library’s inauguration ceremony as an honored guest. She made a remarkable statement: “education without compassion means nothing.”

History of the Institution

Valdomiro Laurindo de Sousa was the first FAAMA general director and Pastor Davi Pereira Tavares was SALT director. In the first year, the theology classes were held in the elementary school building and, later, in the library building. During this period, around 40 theology students did several projects with the community, providing guidance about health, cleaning squares, and conducting evangelistic series. As a direct result of this work, 1,109 people were baptized, and five new churches were inaugurated. Another great achievement for the SALT seminary was the inauguration of the Ellen G. White Study Center on August 31, 2011. One of the Center’s goals has been to “encourage the study and research of Ellen G. White’s life and writings as well as the history and denominational thinking of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

In 2013, the Theology program had 209 students, considered the largest enrollment at the regional campuses in Brazil until the present. In May of the same year, the seminary operating at FAAMA was officially incorporated into SALT-SAD, becoming a regional campus of the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia). The first graduation of SALT-FAAMA took place from November 29 to December 1, 2013, when 46 graduates concluded their training for the pastoral ministry. The graduation ceremonies took place at the campus church building and at the Marco Adventist Church in Belém and were attended by around 1,500 people.

Among those who graduated in 2013, was Douglas Domingos, the first deaf Adventist graduating in theology in Brazil. After the graduation, Domingos joined the pastoral ministry and started working for the São Paulo Conference. In the following year (2014), the first group of lay leaders and Adventist church administrators in the north region of Brazil finished the special Theology program offered to them by SALT-FAAMA. This program is organized in four modules and takes place in July when FAAMA students are on vacation. In the same year (2014), 34 students completed their ministerial preparation after graduating from SALT-FAAMA.

In 2015, 48 students graduated in Theology. In 2016, 189 students enrolled in the theology program. Three achievements stood out that year: the inauguration of a new building for the elementary education, popularly called FAAMINHA (Little FAAMA); new acquisitions for the library, which increased to 12,411 volumes; and the meeting of Adventist musicians, which took place from January 14 to 17.

Another important achievement occurred on December 7, 2016, when FAAMA was recognized as a higher education institution by the Ministry of Education of Brazil. On the same occasion, the theology program and the teaching qualification courses were recognized, both evaluated with grade five, the highest score available in the evaluation of...
higher education courses in Brazil. In 2017, as a result of the recognition of the Ministry of Education of Brazil, the seminary had 191 theology students. At the end of that year, 52 students graduated in theology. That was the highest number of graduates in the history of the school to date.

The year 2018 began with 173 students enrolled at SALT-FAAMA and ended with 37 new theology graduates. On November 2 and 4 of the same year, the institution held the first Prison Mission Symposium. In the same year, a research program focusing on scientific innovations began, aiming at involving students in academic research. In 2019, the seminary had 164 students, and 45 received a bachelor’s degree in Theology at the end of the year.

Historical Role of the Institution

SALT-FAAMA seeks to offer an education that fulfills the objectives of the global Adventist Church mission while seeking to be sensitive to the local peculiarities and needs. With that goal in mind, the students are given opportunities to participate in various academic and mission activities with the Adventist churches and institutions in the north and northwest regions. Thus, the academic calendar is dynamic, including internships, week-long evangelism, three-month evangelism, library week, theological week, and other programs.

In addition to this involvement with the churches, SALT-FAAMA has also sought to integrate its students into the daily life of the local community. For example, in 2017, the school launched the program “Sexta Básica” (Basic Friday), a project coordinated by the theology students. The program includes youth worship services for students and the community. The FAAMA's church hosts the various programs of TV Novo Tempo (Adventist Media Center – Brazil) and the Classe Bíblica Novo Tempo (Adventist Media Center Bible Class). The Bible study classes are always run and coordinated by the theology students.

While seeking to involve students in the various ministerial programs, SALT-FAAMA is also concerned about the students’ family and personal preparation. Thus, it promotes various activities that seek to support the development of the students in these areas. For example, each semester a teacher is invited to address relevant topics of interest to students. In addition, the Theologian Council (Concilho do Teologando) is held every year, when students are presented with the profile of the Adventist pastor. SALT also provides permanent support for the students’ families, including special programs such as “Dia da Família” (Family Day) and “Dia da Criança” (Children’s Day), in which activities aiming at meeting the needs of social interaction are promoted.

In 2019, a partnership was made between SALT-FAAMA and the West Para Mission when 33 theology students were consecrated to work in the congregations on the Mission’s territory during the Holy Week. Initiatives such as this one and their positive results have been repeated in recent years, which shows the seminary’s commitment to Adventist mission.

What Remains to be Done to Fulfill the Institution’s Mission

SALT-FAAMA was established to prepare future pastors and workers to serve the Adventist church, mainly in the north and northwest regions of the country. For it to continue its work with excellence, several goals need to be achieved. One of them is to maintain the recognition of the Ministry of Education of Brazil. Another important action is the implementation of a postgraduate program in Theology that is accredited by the Ministry of Education of Brazil. Training new teachers and expanding the theological library are also among the school’s priorities. The campus needs a separate building to serve as the SALT headquarters. Among the greatest challenges faced by the seminary to achieve these objectives are the lack of financial resources and finding Adventist professionals willing to live in the region where the institution is located.

Anchored in the Word of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the SALT-FAAMA family will remain confident in divine providence and committed to the sole purpose of preparing pastors and workers who will serve the Adventist church wherever they are called to do so.

Chronology of Directors

Davi Pereira Tavares (2010-2012); Wilson Roberto de Borba (2013-present)

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NOTES

1. Wilson Borba (director of SALT-FAAMA), email message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 18, 2019.


13. Ibid.


15. Ibid.


17. Ibid.


20. Ibid.

21.
“Faama inaugura biblioteca” [FAAMA inaugurates library], Revista Adventista [Adventist Review], no. 1226, year 105, July 2010, 39.


24. Wilson Borba (director of SALT-FAAMA), email message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 18, 2019.


29. Willian Silvestre Costa, personal knowledge for having worked in the ministry that sponsored Douglas’ studies.


33. Wilson Borba (director of SALT-FAAMA), email message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 18, 2019.


35. Wilson Borba (director of SALT-FAAMA), email message to Carlos Flavio Teixeira (ESDA assistant editor), September 18, 2019.


38. “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 goal 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 Harvest and Sowing Evangelism], accessed on February 4, 2020, https://bit.ly/2uMWoue.

39. Ibid.