



AdventHealth University campus center.

Photo courtesy of AdventHealth University.

AdventHealth University

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AdventHealth University (AHU) is a Seventh-day Adventist institution specializing in healthcare education in a faith-affirming environment. The physical facilities of AHU were established, and are still located, on the peninsula which separates Lake Winyah from Lake Estelle in Orlando, Florida next to Florida Hospital's Orlando campus.¹ AHU is accredited as a Level V institution by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award Certificates, Associate's, Baccalaureate's, and Master's degrees,

and a Doctoral degree. The University is also accredited by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist, Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AAA). Hospitals used by the college for clinical experiences are accredited by the Joint Commission.² The University offers over 20 undergraduate and graduate degrees from associate to doctorate-level, including online and post-baccalaureate certificates.

History of the School

AHU was opened on August 24, 1992, but its educational history extends back over a century, beginning with medical education programs at Florida Hospital, which opened in 1908 and serves Greater Orlando as a community hospital as well as acting as a major tertiary referral hospital for Central Florida and much of the Southeast, the Caribbean, and South America.³

In 1913, a Registered Nursing program was established by what is now Florida Hospital Medical Center (FHMC) and operated for 70 years as a three-year hospital-based nursing training program. In 1983, a two-year associate degree nursing education program was begun at FHMC under the sponsorship of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, now Southern Adventist University (SAU).

In 1981, Bill Iles, a member of Florida Hospital's leadership, was an early player in pushing for Florida Hospital to open its own college. Iles approached Tom Werner, then president of Florida Hospital, other members of leadership, and the State of Florida about how the Hospital needed to become engaged and start a college on its campus.

Florida Hospital was looking at the future of healthcare and ways in which their incoming employees were being educated. At that time, the hospital offered educational programs in Nursing, Radiography, and Sonography. Healthcare education was shifting away from diploma-based programs in favor of A.S. degrees, which offered a more robust curriculum. In addition, the programs were not providing enough benefit for the costs involved. Tom Werner, then president of Florida Hospital, saw an opportunity to open a new college that would provide a steady stream of new employees with the education and mission-focused values that Florida Hospital needed.

In 1988, Tom Werner called and asked Dr. Robert Williams, then the president of Kettering College of Medical Arts, to visit the Hospital and its campus and conduct a study of their programs to see whether Florida Hospital should start its own college. He also invited Dr. Don Sahly, president of SAU at the time, to join Dr. Williams. They both worked on the report and submitted it to Werner, concluding that it would be to the advantage of the Hospital to start its own college. The planned outcome would be to gather the programs the Hospital was presently doing in sponsorship with SAU and its hospital-based programs and bring them together into a two-year college institution.

In 1990, Werner approached Dr. David Greenlaw, who was a chaplain at FH at the time, and asked if he would take on the task of determining whether a college would be beneficial to the hospital. Werner knew that Dr.

Greenlaw had a higher education background in addition to his mission work. After he had Dr. Greenlaw read the study completed by Dr. Williams and Dr. Sahly, Werner asked him to conduct a Feasibility Study. The study would analyze factors in establishing a college, including cost, space, the process of accreditation and obtaining the necessary licensure, and the structure of the institution among other considerations.

At that time, the peninsula where AHU now stands was just a parking lot with weeds, an abandoned church that was beyond repair, an old residence hall/classroom from the early 1950s and a few apartment buildings. But Werner and Dr. Greenlaw saw the space as a potential college campus that would have the advantage of proximity to Florida Hospital.

With the help of outside consultants, Dr. Greenlaw compiled an official report with the recommendation that Florida Hospital starts its own college. He submitted this report to Werner and then the Board at Florida Hospital in November 1990.

After that, Tom Werner officially asked Dr. Greenlaw to proceed with the development of a college for Florida Hospital. Dr. Greenlaw accepted the responsibility of establishing and directing the new institution, becoming AHU's Founder, CEO, and first president. Dr. Robert Williams joined Dr. Greenlaw and served as the college's first academic dean.

There have been two constants in AHU's purpose from its inception. First is the focus on mission, Florida Hospital wanted to develop a group of highly competent medical professionals who view their life's work as a calling. The second focus is on quality education - people exiting the school are qualified and can work in any medical setting in the country.⁴

The starting mission of the school was, "Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences is consistent with and grows directly out of that of its parent institution, Florida Hospital, an implementation arm of the health care mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with particular reference to the hospital's mission in its pledge to its patients, its heritage and its Christian image of God."⁵

The college faced its share of opposition during its development both from local colleges afraid of losing faculty and staff as well as from members of the Hospital itself, who were not sure opening a school was a fiscally responsible decision for Florida Hospital at that time. However, the College did receive the financial backing of Florida Hospital from the beginning of its development until today. In a memorandum dated July 25, 1991, Mardian J. Blair, then vice chairman of the Florida Hospital Board of Directors, pledged the resources of the Hospital in support of the College "from the point of its inception until it becomes financially self-supporting, and at any point in the future at which it may fail to be self-supporting." As a teaching hospital, Florida Hospital receives Medicare Pass Through Payments which allows the hospital to pass on those dollars to the University as a subsidy that keeps student tuition costs more than 25 percent less than they would be otherwise.

Accreditation

There were challenges in obtaining their initial accreditation, but the College did receive a Certificate of Exemption from the State Board of Independent Colleges and Universities (SBICU). By 1994, the college was at Candidacy status with SACSCOC for accreditation and received accreditation from the Adventist Accrediting Association. In 1996, SACSCOC approved the College for Accreditation at the Associate Degree level.

Despite not having its full accreditation, the College's connection with Florida Hospital worked in its favor and 243 students registered for classes on the school's opening day. The school opened under the name Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences (FHCHS) with 26 faculty members, full- and part-time.⁶ This marked the beginning of the school's first significant era as an associate degree granting college.

Formal radiographic education began on the FHMC campus in 1962 and was transferred to FHCHS in 1992 with the school's opening with the approval of the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation of the American Medical Association, and is accredited today by its successor, the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiological Technology (JRCERT). The Diagnostic Medical Sonography program, which was established by FMC in 1988, is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).

The Nursing program from Florida Hospital's campus was also moved to the new College, where it received accreditation from SACSCOC as well as full recognition by the National League for Nursing (NLN). These programs were augmented by programs in Radiation Therapy to form the College's first four curriculum offerings, which were associate-level degrees in Nursing, Radiation Therapy, Sonography, and Radiography.⁷

Renovations

On the date of opening, the campus consisted of several remodeled apartments that housed imaging programs, a 40-year-old dormitory with classrooms and offices on the first floor, an abandoned church in the final stages of remodeling, a double-wide trailer for faculty offices, and a refurbished house used as the executive offices.⁸

The General Education building, which served the FH community for many years as a church and religious education center, has now been completely renovated to serve as the College Library, College administrative offices, science labs, a classroom and Pre-Professional/Education offices.⁹

In 1995, a home on the campus was remodeled to provide offices for Student Services personnel, a game room and student lounge. Today, this house is known as Anderson House and is the base for the Office of Mission and Campus Ministries' activities.¹⁰

The Nursing building was completed in 1996 to house the Nursing programs and skills labs, classrooms, computer labs, the Learning Resources Center, a 90-seat amphitheater, and offices.¹¹

Rapid Growth

AHU's student enrollment grew rapidly since the schools' opening in 1992. Enrollment numbers went from below 500 students in the 1992-1993 academic year to nearly 3,000 students in the 2010-2011 academic year. The numbers include all students, including online, dual-enrollment, and students of AHU's Denver satellite location. AHU was an early adopter of distance education, which grew into one of the largest online completion degree providers.¹² In the Fall 2010 term, AHU saw its highest student enrollment to date with 2,741 total students driven largely by the online business and the high unemployment after the Great Recession. Student enrollment has declined during the lengthy post-recession recovery and due to strong online competition. Nevertheless, the on-campus enrollment continues to grow with addition of several new graduate programs, and the Denver campus has doubled its enrollment in the last few years.

Starting from 26 employees on AHU's opening day, the University now employs over 250 faculty and staff members, including four of the University's original 26 employees.¹³

In the 1996 – 1997 bulletin, the school's mission statement was updated to, "The Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences is a Seventh-day Adventist institution owned by Florida Hospital and specializing in allied health and nursing education. Consistent with the mission of its parent institution, FHCHS provides an environment where students can develop spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically while pursuing professional expertise integrated with Christian values. FHCHS is a two-year institution offering Associate degrees and Certificate programs in a variety of health-related careers. The College and Faculty are committed to excellence in providing Florida Hospital and similar institutions with competent professionals who have an understanding of the beliefs, values, and principles of the Judeo-Christian tradition."¹⁴

In 1998, SACSCOC granted the school level II accreditation and AHU headed into its second major era as a baccalaureate degree granting institution. The mission statement was updated to reflect that FHCHS was now a "four-year institution offering Certificate programs, Associate, and Baccalaureate degrees in a variety of health-related careers."¹⁵

During that same year the College added an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) A.S. degree followed by the school's first bachelor's program, a B.S. degree in Nursing. AHU later added two more associate degrees, one in Pre-Professional studies (2000) and the other in Nuclear Medicine (2002).

In 2001, AHU continued its expansion by becoming one of the earliest schools to enter the online space, receiving accreditation to offer distance degrees from SACSCOC. Now, all students who felt the call to healthcare would have access to AHU's mission-focused education, no matter the distance. The first program offered in an entirely off-campus modality was a Radiography B.S. Completion degree.

In 2000, a B.S. Completion degree in Nursing was added to the online line-up followed by a third B.S. Completion program in Diagnostic Medical Sonography in 2007. Currently, AHU offers online B.S. degrees in Radiologic

Sciences, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Nursing, graduate degrees in Health Administration. Additionally, AHU's continuing education division, Echelon, provides high-quality online continuing education to hospitals and corporate partners across the United States.

In the 2005 – 2006 bulletin, the mission statement was again revised to, "Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences, a Seventh-day Adventist institution owned by Florida Hospital, specializes in the education of healthcare professionals. In harmony with the mission of Florida Hospital, the College provides an environment where students can develop spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically while pursuing professional expertise integrated with Christian values," and added Purpose Statements to guide the College's development and growth.

In 2006, the 64,000 square-foot Campus Center building opened, adding many classrooms, labs, offices for academic departments and administration, an expanded bookstore, the NESS Café, and the Student Success Center. The new building also houses the Chapel, just off the main entrance of the Center, that celebrates AHU's Christian mission.¹⁶

The third major era for AHU began 10 years later in 2008 when the school received level III accreditation by SACSCOC to offer master's degrees. Nurse Anesthesia was introduced as the University's first graduate program in Nurse Anesthesia. The program is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA).

In the 2008 – 2009 bulletin, the school added four vision words to its existing mission statement: Nurture, Excellence, Spirituality, and Stewardship. These words were the result of a school-wide vote and remain guiding values for the institution today.

Around 2008, an opportunity arose in Colorado. Adventist Health System (AHS), the school's corporate parent, had four hospitals in the Denver area where they had been struggling to find qualified, mission-oriented healthcare providers. When the leaders of these institutions became aware of FHCHS and its ability to deliver distance education, they invited College administrators to offer classes in Denver.

That initial inquiry led the College to live-interactive video broadcast education. By 2009, equipment was purchased and installed on campus in Orlando and at a site offered by Porter Adventist Hospital in Denver. AHU's expansion into Denver faced opposition in the beginning. Colorado Board of Nursing did not want AHU there and they were rejected several times before receiving approval by the Board to begin offering degrees.

With the approval of the Colorado Board of Education to offer degrees, the first students began nursing classes at the Denver site by the end of that year. In 2011, a Radiography degree was added to the Denver programs and Sonography courses were offered the next year.

As expertise in video broadcast technology grew, other opportunities grew as well. Dual enrollment courses were offered via the same broadcasting technology at Vista Ridge Academy in Boulder, CO. Next, the same tech

was used to establish a dual enrollment program with schools in FL: first, Greater Miami Academy, and then Walker Memorial in Avon Park.

In the 2009-2010 bulletin, the mission statement was updated to, "Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences, a Seventh-day Adventist institution, specializes in the education of professionals in healthcare. Service-oriented and guided by the values of nurture, excellence, spirituality and stewardship, the College seeks to develop leaders who will practice healthcare as a ministry."¹⁷

Change of Name and New Programs

After the addition of their first graduate degree and with AHU's presence growing outside of Central Florida, Dr. Greenlaw felt that the school's name needed to be revisited. Florida Hospital was not as quickly identifiable outside of the local region, where it was a well-known institution, and it did not connect well with prospective distance learning students or students attending the new Denver classes. Dr. Greenlaw suggested a name change that would be instantly recognizable to prospective students, the Adventist University of Health Sciences (ADU), and the change was approved in 2012.¹⁸

The replacement of "University" for "College" in the name was to show the school's change in status from its beginnings as an associate-level degree granting institution to one that was now offering master's level graduate degrees.

The new Adventist name reflects both the faith-based origins within the Seventh-day Adventist higher education mission and the institution's connection to AHS, is not limited to the Central Florida region, and serves as a more meaningful name for the Denver community. The final change to AHU's mission statement was to update the 2008-2009 revised mission with the University's new name in the 2013-2014 bulletin. It remains the most current mission statement as of August 2017, and is also supplemented by a new mission motto, "developing skilled professionals who *live* the healing values of Christ."

After the introduction of its first graduate program in Nurse Anesthesia, AHU made plans to roll out more Master's degrees over the next few years. At that time, the University only offered an A.S. in Pre-Professional Studies, and Dr. Len Archer, the Chair for that program, felt the school should develop new bachelor's programs that would fully satisfy pre-requisites for graduate programs and Ph.D. studies.

He helped introduce degrees in Biomedical Sciences and Health Sciences, which would each focus on preparing students for a variety of Pre-Professional programs, including Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant, Occupational Therapy, Healthcare Administration, and Pre-Med studies. A B.S. in Health Sciences was introduced in 2002, which enrolled students interested in one of two tracks: Medicine, or Physical or Occupational Therapy. In 2008, a B.S. in Biological Sciences was added for students preparing for careers in medicine or dentistry.

With the growth of the A.S. OTA since its start in 1998, two realities had become apparent. First, there were many clinical opportunities available in Central Florida. Second, there was no Occupational Therapy program within a 13-county radius of Orlando. This led to the decision to introduce AHU's next graduate degree, a master's in Occupational Therapy, which began enrolling students in 2011. AHU's OT programs are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

In 2012, AHU broke ground on the planned 60,000 square-foot Graduate Building and was officially dedicated at a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 3, 2014. The Graduate Building houses all current and proposed graduate programs. It also contains a 350-seat auditorium, the Dr. Greenlaw Conference Center, and the Simulation Center labs.¹⁹

On the same day the Graduate Building was dedicated, AHU also introduced its Garden of Miracles. The Seven paths leading to seven panels of glass that tower fourteen feet above the ground. Each panel features a stylized depiction of one of the miracles performed by Jesus. The selected miracles represent paths to wholeness, usefulness, hope, peace, faith, restoration, and life.²⁰

Maurizio Mazo was the lead architect on the project and Maurice Casa the artist. Design, construction and installation for the Garden were generously donated by Hunton Brady Architects, Brasfield and Gorrie, BBM Structural Engineers, Bellommo-Herbert, A GAI company, Poulos & Bennett, and TLF Engineering for Architecture.²¹

In 2011, a new Generic Bachelor's in Nursing degree was introduced and the A.S. Nursing program was phased out. The following year the A.S degree in Nuclear Medicine also transitioned to a B.S. after AHU had been selected by the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (SNMMI) to serve as a pilot program in 2010. In November 2013, the program received the maximum 7-year accreditation from the Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine Technology (JRCNMT).

AHU continued to add new graduate degrees to its offerings with a master's in Healthcare Administration in 2013 and a master's degree in Physician Assistant Studies in 2015. AHU's Physician Assistant program received probationary status from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) until its next review in June 2019.²²

In 2015, a B.S. in Conductive Education program was added, making AHU the first healthcare University in the United States to offer one,²³ followed by a B.S. in Healthcare Administration and an Online Executive Master of Healthcare Administration.

AHU moved into the fourth major era with the addition of its first doctoral degree in Physical Therapy in 2016. Effective November 11, 2015, AdventHealth University (AHU) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE).²⁴

In 2016, two centers of excellence have opened at AHU: Center for Population Health Research (CPHR) and Center for Advanced Ultrasound Education (CAUE). The CPHR engages students and faculty in applying geographic information systems (GIS) technologies to medical geography research, incorporating current projects already in progress at AHU. Directed by Dr. Russ Butler, professor of Biology, students gain hands-on research experience while developing skills in spatial thinking, quantitative analysis, and problem solving.²⁵

The CAUE, under the guidance of Professor Charlotte Henningsen, expands ongoing initiatives to provide opportunities for education beyond what is captured in current Sonography programs at AHU. The Center offers continuing education training for the ultrasound community in Central Florida, including emergency physician training and training for the Radiology Physician residency program at Florida Hospital. In addition, the center consolidates efforts of department faculty and their contributions to the ultrasound education community.²⁶

To support research efforts, AHU through its Grants Management Committee, competitively awards Faculty Research Seed Grants in the Fall and Spring trimesters to qualified university faculty and faculty/student teams.

In November of 2016, AHU signed an agreement with Stetson University to collaborate in the creation of new opportunities for their students. The agreement outlines several career pathways that Stetson and AHU students can follow toward earning degrees at either campus as well as dual-degree offerings. These new prospects introduce stronger career options for graduates as well as opportunities for joint research.²⁷

In keeping with AHU's Adventist roots, the University has held a distinctive space in humanitarianism, and community outreach projects. Since 1999, members of AHU have participated in yearly mission trips, and all students receiving an undergraduate degree must complete a service-learning graduation requirement. In 2008, a mandatory Service Learning course was introduced to facilitate this goal.

In Service Learning, students engage in service activities with intentional academic learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connects to their academic disciplines. Guided reflection is a key component of service learning; students will integrate their service experiences with classroom knowledge to enhance the learning process.

AHU's Office of Community Engagement works with community partners to set up service learning projects and volunteer opportunities for students as well as faculty and staff. There is also the annual Service Day where faculty and staff gather to volunteer at a local community organization. The first annual Service Day took place on August 26, 2009 at Primrose, a large facility in South Orlando serving the needs of the mentally and physically challenged of Orange County.

The Community Engagement department also organizes and hosts annual Summer Science Camps with a local branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs. The week-long, day camp is designed to teach middle school aged children the benefits of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education, health education, and health careers. The children participate in science workshops, field trips, and fitness and wellness workshops.²⁸

Embedding service in learning is a fundamental principle at AHU. Dr. Tia Hughes from the institution's Occupational Therapy department took it to the next level, enhancing its curriculum with an innovative course that would better teach her students and serve the community by delivering care to the uninsured. What began as a volunteer initiative in 2011 has evolved into a required three-semester course in the master's degree OT program.

Hughes' effort also established the HOPE Clinic (Healing through Occupation, Purpose and Excellence) – making AHU's OT program the first in Florida to operate its own free-standing clinic.²⁹ In 2016, the Community Health Impact Council (CHiC) of FL Hospital approved a grant for the clinic, enabling it to expand in size and impact. The newly improved Clinic is expected to open in the Summer of 2019.

AHU and Florida Hospital have also partnered to develop the Community Health Transitional Care (CHTC) Internship. CHTC is a partnership program with Florida Hospital offering AHU students the opportunity to work in instrumental care helping to improve patients' quality of life and safety upon returning home and into the community.³⁰

AHU has helped advance the development of a stronger relationship between institutions of higher education in the SDA World Church. In 2001 and 2002, Dr. Greenlaw, along with other presidents of the accredited Adventist colleges and universities in North America, collaborated to raise the bar in Adventist education. This led to the creation of the Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities (AACU). While each college continues its independent leadership and recruitment efforts, drawing together to improve Adventist higher education is the key focus of AACU.

To contribute to the intellectual and spiritual discourse of the Orlando community, the University has hosted yearly Colloquium Series since 2013 inviting speakers, usually recently published authors, to the campus to lead discussions related to a chosen theme. The first year's theme was Moral Courage followed by Resiliency, Integrity, and, for 2016-2017, Faith & Loss.³¹

On July 31, 2017, Dr. Greenlaw retired as AHU's president, and Provost Edwin I. Hernández was appointed by the Board of Trustees to serve as the school's next president. He began his new role on August 1, 2017.³²

Rebranding of AHU

The fifth and current era of AHU started with the re-branding of the University as AdventHealth University, announced in 2018. The re-branding followed Adventist Health System's announcement that the organization and its wholly owned entities would be known as AdventHealth beginning January 2, 2019. In March 2019, AHU completed its new brand transition.³³

In a statement on its website, AHU wrote, "The name, AdventHealth University identifies it as a place of beginnings, where students can fulfill their dreams of providing whole-person health care. As the University

sharing the national health care organization's name, AdventHealth University will contribute to AdventHealth's promise of wholeness by providing whole-person health care education to its students."

As AHU progresses, mission is a key variable. As an Adventist Christian institution of higher learning, AHU's focus remains to shape the heart and mind of its students to see themselves as healthcare professionals who extend the healing values and ministry of Christ.

However, ensuring AHU remains on track as an institution of educational excellence is commensurate. The aspiration is for both to be integrated into a wholistic understanding of healthcare, aligning with the institution's principles of training mind, body, and spirit in its students. The expectation of graduates is that in addition to understanding and practicing the key elements of the Adventist healthcare mission, they will be clinically outstanding, leadership-oriented, and increasingly work ready through practiced assimilation into the culture and climate of their future workplace settings.³⁴

To continue its success, AHU plans to prepare students for a rapidly evolving field with increased importance placed on innovation in the practice, thinking, and execution of its education. AHU's students should exit the University with a perspective that is open to exploring new frontiers and working on interprofessional teams to find the best solutions.

Through its connection with Florida Hospital, the University is in a unique position to utilize opportunities for faculty and staff to add to the research enterprise of the hospital, contributing to the advancement of clinical practice. AHU will work to offer more pathways for students to participate in community settings, allowing them to immediately impact community health and research while they earn their degrees.

AHU is working to offer new graduate programs and working closely with extended care providers to develop new programs with key competencies that prepare students to fill important clinical roles with a broader skillset than is currently provided.

Names

Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences (1992-2012)

Adventist University of Health Sciences (2012-)

Presidents

David E. Greenlaw (1992-2017)

Edwin I. Hernández, Ph.D. (2017-)

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