

Misiones Adventist College

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The Misiones Adventist College (Instituto Superior Adventista de Misiones or ISAM) is an institution of the worldwide educational system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and operates in the territory of the Argentine Union Conference (UA) at 410 Russia Avenue in the neighborhood of Villa Libertad in the city of Leandro N. Alem, Misiones Province, Argentine Republic. This institution, operating within an area of 70 hectares, offers from preschool to higher education.¹

At the higher education level, ISAM offers six degrees with a national validity title: Primary Education Teachers (4 years), Early Education Teachers (4 years), Secondary Education in Mathematics Teachers (4 years), Music Teachers (4 years), Higher Technician in Administrative Accounting (3 years), Higher Technician in Nursing (3 years).²

The mission of Misiones Adventist College is “to train competent professionals, with full life and an integral development, who promote and practice service to God and their fellowmen, based on the Bible.”³ In order to achieve this objective, the college has a group of 215 dedicated staff members, and in this group, there are 15 workers, four credentialed pastors, 117 employees, and 79 teachers. The number of students in 2016 was 654, and they are distributed among the primary, secondary, and higher education levels.

Developments that Led to the Establishment of the College⁴

Historical records show that, in 1906, Adventist settlers from Ijuí in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, settled in the region, which was then called Picada Rusa.⁵ In 1912, new German Adventist families from the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, also arrived in that region.⁶ These families were extremely interested in having a Christian school so their children could enjoy an education based on Biblical principles. Rodolfo Otto rented his house so a public school could be established there. Meanwhile, he built another house for his family. This is how the Escuela Nacional nº 12 [National School no. 12] emerged, and its first director was Salvador Simsolo.⁷

Due to great interest in providing a Christian education to the children of these Adventists, this idea was presented to Church leaders.⁸ At that time, the Adventist Church in that city was served by Julio Ernst, its first pastor, and Guillermo Otto, its first elder.⁹ These leaders presented the settlers’ request to Church leaders, who decided to send a teacher of German origin so he could fulfill the dream of these Adventist settlers. This is how

Juan Wedekamper (1877-1936), the first director of the Adventist school in Picada Rusa, arrived!¹⁰ This school was the first Adventist educational institution in the Misiones countryside.

Other leaders who supported that cause were pioneers such as H. B. Lundquist, director of the Educational department of the Austral Union Conference (ecclesiastical territory that included the republics of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay),¹¹ and Ignacio Kalbermatter, president of the Alto Paraná Mission (at that time, it included the Republic of Paraguay and the national territory of Misiones, Argentina), which was headquartered in the city of Posadas, Misiones.¹²

The College Foundation

The origin of the institution is related to the immigrant families who settled in Picada Rusa (later known as Picada Libertad and Villa Libertad at 225 Provincial Route), and Pastor Juan Wedekamper, who arrived in the region in 1923. The classes began in that year with 33 students who he taught them to read, write, and perform mathematical operations, and also helped them to gain some knowledge of history, geography, and music.¹³

Pastor Wedekamper, in addition to fulfilling his teaching duties, functioned as principal of the school, which was called “Escuela Sabatista” [Sabbath School]. This first school in the countryside, despite having no official recognition, began operating in a building located in an area of 6.5 hectare (ha).¹⁴

The College History

Since its origin, the institution has been located in the same place, which was first known as Picada Rusa. Two years after its foundation, in 1925, Director Wedekamper, with his wife, Guillermina Otto, carried out a genuine pioneering work during which the school achieved official establishment as an educational institution. And from 1931, under the management of Felipe Sittner (1931-1934) and his wife Albina Rescke, the school grew and its name was changed to “Escuela Bernardino Rivadavia” [Bernardino Rivadavia Adventist Academy].¹⁵ That same year, at the request of the director, the region where the school was located, Picada Rusa, had its name changed to Picada Libertad. This was because the word “Rusa” in Spanish means “Russian” in English, and it was not composed only of Russian immigrants.¹⁶ Eventually, the name of the region was changed to Villa Libertad.

In March 1943, the first grades of secondary education were incorporated.¹⁷ The first students included: Guillermo Bordt, Arturo Gnass, Pablo Kadke, Adolfo Otto, Arnoldo Otto, Guillermina Osorio (de Hein), Ruth Bordt (de Ganzel), María Arnd (de Gualtruzi), and Luisa Rabe (de Baier).¹⁸ At that time, Irma Hardy, Celia Dávalos, and Daniel Leichner were the teachers. The three were in charge of organizing the elementary and high school classes. Subsequently, Yolanda Kalbermatter arrived, so they divided their responsibilities. Celia Dávalos and Yolanda Kalbermatter taught elementary school, and Irma Hardy and Daniel Leichner taught high school.¹⁹ The high school started in a 14x6-meter classroom subdivided with folding partitions, and there were nine students

in this educational level. That year, the institution, directed by Daniel Leichner and his wife Helena Cöhler, received the name "Instituto Juan Bautista Alberdi" [North Argentine Academy] (IJBA).²⁰

Due to the increase in the number of students in the institution over the years, providing a an accommodating place for all their students who wanted to study at the school became extremely difficult. For this reason, the institution planned and designed buildings for the students including boarding school, a kitchen, and a cafeteria.

²¹ The classrooms that were used to teach had also been used for worship meetings, so the construction of a temple was designed. That first temple was inaugurated in 1943,²² and the first boarding schools were completed in 1944. Finally by 1946, the institution had a new classrooms building. The following years, the classrooms received appropriate equipment and others were built in addition to a library and other buildings. Thus, under the administration of Daniel Leichner, electrical wiring for the institution was also installed, and thus the academy took its first steps into the definitive establishment of energy and telephony.

At the beginning and end of the 1950s, with the intention of expanding the size of the academy, the institution purchased the farms belonging to Samuel A. of the Dressner family, which were located at both sides of the original property. The sum of the measure of those lands resulted in a total of eight hectares. Once the buildings for student use were built, in 1953, under the leadership of Justo Joaquín Vallejos, the institution officially provided the first year of high school and began the process to offer other courses.²³

Following that spirit of improvement, both from the institution and from the students and the result of a contest held in 1956, the first student journal was inaugurated, a 24-page review called "Murmillos del Bosque" [Whispers of the Forest]. The mentor of this project was the institution director, Isidoro Andrés Gerometta, and the name of the magazine was created by Elba Yolanda Bruchón, winner of the contest.²⁴ Continuing its growth rate in education and in its facilities and services, the institution, in 1957 and 1958, bought 50 ha of land from Arturo and Carlos Steckler in addition to a 450 m² lot, with an abundant slope, from Adolfo Mogdans.²⁵ Thus, the academy continued to grow more and more.

During this time of improvement, in 1957, the electric light and telephone lines were installed at the academy under the administration of Gerometta, concluding the project previously started by Leichner. In addition, the academy managed to buy its first institutional vehicle that year.²⁶ The following year in 1958, the school song emerged, with lyrics composed by Gastón Fayard and music by Idilio Peverini.²⁷ During that same time, plans were initiated to improve access to drinking water since, until then, people had to take a shower and wash their clothes in streams.²⁸ In that same year, in order to continue to excel in education, the Normal Course (for teacher training) achieved recognition and full official registration for their higher education courses.²⁹ And in December 1962, during the management of José Carballal, professors with official degrees arrived, and the academy held their first ceremony of graduation in National Normal Teacher, and 13 students graduated.³⁰

During the management of Professor Egil H. Wensell, the student buildings were expanded to provide more rooms and other significant improvements. In addition, a carpentry room was built, which later became an

assembly hall. In the academic arena, in 1964, the institution's students participated and won the provincial competition in which they obtained the first prize in the general educational area. The academy's Youth Choir performed at the event. The following year, in 1965, the institution authorized the opening of the Commercial Course (Public Accountant) at the upper secondary level.³¹

In 1967, an auditorium with a capacity for 1,500 people was built. It was used as a temple for many years until the construction of the present temple, which had a capacity to hold 1,200 people. In 1968, the academy built new classrooms, and in 1969, for its 25th anniversary, it inaugurated their science laboratory classroom.³² Thus, the institution grew, reaching official recognition for their secondary grades within 1965 and 1970.³³ Also during Wensell's management, a building was built for the bakery and warehouse ventures. In addition, it changed its front entrance, remodeled the kitchen, and acquired new equipment for the industrial sector. During the management of Director Edwin Iván Mayer (1970-1971), service areas were developed such as carpentry, bakery, poultry, and a farm, among other achievements.

In 1973, under the administration of Carlos F. Steger, the institution agreed on an important donation that allowed the project of a new 3,000 m² male dorm to begin. It had 48 rooms and was inaugurated in 1977 under the management of Isidoro Gerometta.³⁴ The actual construction of the new temple began during the Gerometta administration.³⁵

Years later, following Febo Basanta's management, more courses were offered and agreements were made to continue the growth of the institution so that, in 1980, the institution offered their Music National Teachers course. In 1982, the Primary Education Teachers course began. Likewise, within 1980 and 1987, the academy started to provide Technical Education with a specialty in electromechanics, which later was closed due to financial reasons.³⁶

During the administration of Néstor Sand, in 1992, the institution demolished the first temple inaugurated in 1943 in order to build a library in that location, and several improvements to the services offered by the institution were made, including the incorporation of a better telephone service, the installation of a computer room, and the upgrading of equipment for the industrial area.³⁷ In 1998, under the management of Héctor Pérez, the academy was renamed to "Instituto Adventista Juan Bautista Alberdi" (in English, it was still called North Argentine Academy). The space in the industry sector was improved, and the Fractioning Plant of "Productos Instituto" [Institute Products] and the library were both inaugurated. Pérez also completed several reforms in the educational plans in his administration, abiding by the national educational reforms proposed by the Argentine government.³⁸

From 2000, under an agreement with the River Plate Adventist University (UAP) in Entre Ríos, Argentina, the Higher Technician in Administrative Accounting course was implemented, with the possibility that its graduates completed the Public Accountant course at the UAP. In 2010, the academy offered its first Early Education Teachers course.

Finally, in 2011, after having come a long way, the academy officially became a higher educational institution, and changed its affiliation with the North Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists to the Argentina Union Conference. The following year, in 2012, with the recognition of the UA of the Adventist Church, it was called “Instituto Superior Adventista de Misiones” [Misiones Adventist College] (ISAM). Subsequently, in 2014, the institution offered the higher course for Technician in Nursing, and in 2016, for Mathematics.³⁹ In the most recent year, a strong boost was also given to missionary activities.

In the last few years, among other achievements, the accomplishments in infrastructure, such as the inauguration of the computer room, the new classroom, the temple, the new building for the Early Education, and the remodeling of the gymnasium truly stand out. All these facts better position the ISAM in the educational environment and in society more and more. Similarly, in the academic arena, ISAM started its Early Education Teachers course. Furthermore, the implementation of their first Postgraduate in Sex Education for 100 teachers in the Argentina educational system is an important accomplishment, as well as the signing of a medical residency agreement with Belgrano Adventist Clinic.

Historical Role of the Academy

In addition to these academic and infrastructure achievements, the production planning of industries, which are used as a means of sustenance for the institution and its students, are also critical developments as well as their ability to offer services to the community in general. The industries sector was strongly developed beginning in 1986. During that year, plans were made to relocate and improve the industries sector (self-service and bakery).

Food production is carried out through the trademark “Productos Instituto” [Institute Products], which is dedicated to the fractionating of grains and flours, and are marketed in the province of Misiones. In 1989, at the request of the local government, the institution began to offer opportunities to increase soy consumption, which improved the nutrition of the population. At that time, the academy oversaw the distribution of vegetable milk, which had been produced in its own establishment, in places determined by the local city. Furthermore, the institute provided instructions through educational courses presented so the population could learn how to use the product in different ways.⁴⁰

As a Christian institution, the ISAM has a church on its campus where its students and employees can gather and worship God. This church is comprised of 570 members.⁴¹ Likewise, the ISAM, through the university extension, is present in a Center of Influence located in the nearby city of Leandro N. Alem, which is jointly managed with the North Argentine Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists. In this Center of Influence, students have the opportunity to demonstrate their love for God and their neighbors. Approximately 80 students from higher education and 150 from the middle and high schools go out every Sabbath to conduct missionary work and community services in different locations in the province of Misiones.

These activities consist of visiting, through missionary pairs, orphanages, care centers for the elderly, and hospitals. In conclusion, all these actions are done in relation to the challenge of the SDA Global Mission, and the ISAM objective is to be able to establish a new church as a result of its efforts carried out in fulfillment of the evangelistic mission given by Jesus, the Great Teacher.⁴²

Chronology of Directors⁴³

Escuela Sabatista [Sabbath School] (1923-1930)

Director: Juan Wedekamper (1923-1930)

Escuela Bernardino Rivadavia [Bernardino Rivadavia Adventist Academy] (1931-1942)

Directors: Felipe Sittner (1931-1934); José Riffel (1935-1937); Jorge Riffel (1938-1942).

Instituto Juan Bautista Alberdi [North Argentine Academy] (1943-1997)

Directors: Daniel Leichner (1943-1949); Justo Joaquín Vallejos (1950-1954); Isidoro Andrés Gerometta (1955-1960); José Carballal (1961-1963); Egil H. Wensell (1964-1969); Edwin Iván Mayer (1970-1971); Carlos Federico Steger (1971-1972); Isidoro Andrés Gerometta (1973-1977); Febo Antonio Basanta (1978-1982); Víctor Adán Peto (1983-1985); Raúl Alberto Pérez (1986-1990); Néstor Arnoldo Sand (1991-1995); Héctor Julio Pérez (1996-2000).

Instituto Adventista Juan Bautista Alberdi [North Argentine Academy] (1998-2011)

Director: Gustavo Adolfo Laco (2001-2006).

Instituto Superior Adventista de Misiones [Misiones Adventist College] (2012-Present)

Directors: Edgar Beskow (2011-2015); Leonardo Bertagni (2016-Present).⁴⁴

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44. More information about the ISAM can be found on their website at www.isam.edu.ar or at Facebook: @ISAMisiones and Youtube: ISAMisiones

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