GUDIEL ROBLERO MAZARIEGOS

Gudiel Roblero Mazarięgos, Ph.D. (University of Baja California, Mexico), is the director of research and graduate studies at Linda Vista University, Chiapas, Mexico. He is married to Miriam Rode Barreto Rodríguez and has two children.

Linda Vista University (Universidad Linda Vista – ULV) was sponsored from its beginning by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whose presence in Mexico started in 1891. The university falls under the jurisdiction of Chiapas Mexican Union Conference. Chiapas is one of the 32 federal states of Mexico. Its capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, is the location of the main offices of Chiapas Mexican Union Conference, which, as of 2018, had 228,553 members, 1,171
churches, eight conferences, many secondary education schools, and one institution of higher education, ULV? ULV is located in Pueblo Nuevo, Solistahuacán, kilometer 166+100, of federal highway 190. Its beautiful campus with its student dormitories is located within a dense forest of pine, cypress, and eucalyptus trees. Its pleasant climate generally ranges between 20-22° C most of the year. It is located 1,720 meters above sea level. The campus consists of 104 hectares of agricultural land, which is an ideal setting for study, professional development, and spiritual growth.

Establishing the University

The university is currently located in the state of Chiapas, but ULV dates back to 1947, when visionary and consecrated men committed to Christian education planned the establishment of what was once known as Escuela Agrícola e Industrial del Sureste. At that time, the administrators of Mexican Union Mission were President E. N. Lugeneal and Secretary K. H. Emmerson. Members of the school’s development and planning committee included Harold F. House, I. M. Angel, J. E. Pérez, E. Ponce, V. A. Sauza, J. A. Salazar, A. G. Parfitt, L. E. Breitigan, C. P. Crager, M. E. Olsen, A. J. Calderón, W. B. Mulholland, and J. G. Petty. This educational project became a reality in 1947, when a plot of land labeled “Himalaya” was acquired on which to build the institution that was founded as Escuela Agrícola e Industrial del Sureste. This school sat on a plot of land designated La Trinidad in the municipality of Teapa, Tabasco, Mexico.

This land donated by Tabasco’s government did not meet the requirements to establish an Adventist college in the south of the country. Therefore, in 1957, a new board of directors comprised of Harold F. House, E. C. Christe, J. Corral, D. Cortés, J. Leor, R. F. Mattison, C. F. Montgomery, J. Quintero, L. Villarreal, R. F. Williams, R. Bustillos, H. Kelley, and F. Reyes voted to transfer the students and teachers in Tabasco to a different geographic area. The new place included a fraction of Santa Cruz and Venecia in the municipality of Pueblo Nuevo, Solistahuacán, Chiapas. It was legally acquired on March 10, 1958. The Mexican Union Mission voted to name the college Colegio Linda Vista, which would later be renamed Universidad Linda Vista.

One of the main reasons to establish the college in either Tabasco or Chiapas was that both states had a great concentration of church members who needed attention and encouragement to attend Christian schools. Among the pioneers who lent their service to the Southeastern Agricultural and Industrial School are Pastor C. V. Green, Dr. Youngberg, Octavio Serrano, Marcos de León, Loida Jiménez, Félix Zacarias, Alicia Montes, Raquel Juárez, Hipólito Preciado, Blas Cobarrubias, David Zazueta, Heberto Ramos, Salvador Córdoba, and Teófilo Torres.

Among those who transferred from Teapa to the Linda Vista College in Chiapas in 1957 are Susana Zenteno, Heberto Ramos, Jeremías and Lilia Tosca, Raquel Juárez, Hipólito Preciado, Salvador Córdoba, Rosa de Ramos, Samuel Ramos, Daniel Ramos, Hilda Córdoba, Esther Hernández, Betty Brindis, Elizabeth Martinez, Rosa Esther Ramos, Joel Hipólito, Javier Peregrino and A. Chang García. Another special group that came from the United States included Horacio and Rosalia Kelley and their children, Horacio, Aubrey, John, Mike, Patricia, and María Elena, who served from 1957-1963. Paul and Lorna Allred and their children, Tim, Aneva, and Dennis, arrived after an invitation from the Kelley family and supported the new institution.

Construction and Early Programs

In 1958, construction began, and the first houses for employees were built. On May 15, 1959, the middle school formally opened its doors. The men’s dormitory was built in 1960, the cafeteria building was built in 1962, and the secondary school began its academic program in 1964. In that same year, the women’s dormitory was finished for middle and secondary school students. In 1965, the “Horacio Kelley” auditorium was built. In 1968, the administration building was built, and it is used in the present day.

The one kilometer road to reach the main building from federal highway 190 was not paved. For many years, it remained a dirt road. In 1971, it was finally paved. In 1972, a dormitory for boys and the first secondary school classrooms were built. Three years later, a dormitory for young men was also built.

Facing the need for higher education in that region, an initiative emerged to offer college level courses, which became a reality due to the affiliation agreements signed with Universidad de Montemorelos. While the aforementioned was happening, through the vision of Mexican Union Mission’s administrators and the need for Adventist school teachers, for the 1978-1979 school year, Linda Vista College became the center for the first generation of elementary school teachers. Student enrollment continued to grow, and, consequently, so did the need for employees. Thus, in 1982, more employee housing was built in addition to a building with ten rooms for occasional guests. At the end of that decade, a carpentry shop was set up to assist with the development of students’ manual skills.

A multipurpose building had existed with the primary purpose of a dining room, but it was replaced in 1992. On July 14, 1995, the Secretaría de Educación Pública of the state of Chiapas authorized the bachelor’s degree in educational sciences to be offered as an extension to Montemorelos University. One year later, a building was constructed specifically to be used for university classrooms and is currently known as building “C.” On June 12, 1997, Linda Vista College was authorized to be known as “Chiapas Campus of Montemorelos University,” and that affiliation remained until 2005.
Other services that Linda Vista College offered as an extension of Montemorelos University was the secondary school curriculum offered during the summers and a bachelor’s degree in theology starting with the 1990-1991 school year. In 1995, the bachelor’s degree in educational sciences was offered during the summers with emphasis in educational psychology, physics and mathematics, languages and literature, social sciences, and chemistry and biology. Also in that year, the master’s in education was offered in the areas of curriculum development, higher education, and educational administration, along with a master’s degree in finance. During 1994 and 1995, the technical nursing degree was initiated and completed in 1996. This was a prerequisite to establish the bachelor’s degree in nursing as an extension of Montemorelos University. In 1998, a modern library was built on the campus.

Higher Education for a New Century

On the threshold of the 21st Century, the social and political conditions of the region and the country were different. It became necessary for Linda Vista College to modernize via connectivity to the Internet, which was made possible in 2001. The college also had the priority to offer its own higher education programs, and the board of directors of South Mexican Union Conference authorized initiating the process for it to become an institution of higher learning. On May 30, 2002, with the presence of the governor of the state of Chiapas, Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía, the college became “Linda Vista University.”

ULV was authorized to offer its own educational programs by the Secretaría de Educación Pública. The first authorized stand-alone program was nursing, which was granted on June 20, 2001. On October 27 of the same year, the information systems management program was authorized. On August 10, 2005, the education sciences teacher training program was added. The engineering program began on August 1, 2006, when the computer systems engineering program was authorized.

Facing the need for teachers and exploring the possibility of offering distance learning, on August 21, 2006, a hybrid program was started, which was the bachelor’s in the teaching of middle and secondary school education in five specialty areas: physics and mathematics, chemistry and biology, languages and literature, social sciences, and educational psychology.

The offering of new academic programs required development of the infrastructure. Therefore, in 2009, building “B” was constructed to house the office of the academic vice president, classrooms, coordinators’ offices, and professors’ cubicles.

To enhance educational offerings in the area of health, on September 27, 2010, the nutrition career was established. On November 11, 2010, the theology program received its official registration of validation. This meant that theology students, who were graduating without recognition by the state before then, were now graduating with official recognition.

On August 10, 2015, the network connectivity and software development engineering program were approved to be offered. On the same date, the administrative professional programs of public accounting and finances and the business administration program were authorized. The most recent program in the area of health was authorized on March 7, 2018, as a bachelor’s in clinical psychology and health.

Even though pre-school education was already offered at ULV, it did not become a mandatory offering until 2004. This made it necessary to begin the process to obtain proper authorization to officially offer the pre-school program. This authorization was obtained on March 7, 2005.

Extending the Reach of ULV

The Instituto de Estudios Superiores del Centro de Chiapas in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, and the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Mérida in Mérida, Yucatán, both offered higher education programs. In 2006, the ULV board of directors voted that ULV would be the main campus to offer higher education programs and that both institutes would become ULV extension campuses.

Another academic challenge for ULV was the need to offer graduate programs. This challenge was met on September 30, 2008, when the Secretaría de Educación Pública authorized the offering of the master’s degree in finance and the master’s degree in education with three emphases: teaching and administration, special education, and educational innovation.

A fundamental pillar of universities is research, which ULV began to implement in 2011, when it integrated research as a fundamental part of the education process. Graduates, special music classes, church youth meetings, and pastor and teacher conventions are some of the events which the university has organized and still organizes. Another significant year for ULV was 2012, when a modern university-level men’s residence hall was built. The most recent constructions have been the multifunctional auditorium with a seating capacity of 5,000 people in 2015 and the music academy building on July 7, 2019.

ULV currently publishes two academic journals: Kerigma, which covers theological topics, and Ojtaquinel, a multidisciplinary research journal.
The University’s Historic Role

Over time, ULV has strived to uphold the Adventist worldwide educational standards as outlined by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities. One requirement is to serve the Adventist population not excluding those who profess other religious beliefs. The ULV 2018 report indicated that 97% of the student body and of the faculty and staff members were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Throughout its history, most students were from Mexico; nonetheless, during the 2018-2019 school year, ULV enrolled students from many places, including Central America, Africa, North America, Russia, and South America.

A feeling of “being a family” permeates the campus mostly through youth clubs, which help promote identity and in which students, faculty, and staff participate. A program that promotes Christian culture is the week of individual improvement, which is held every semester. Additionally, the institution participates in an ingathering campaign to raise funds for programs managed by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

A growing trend is the participation of ULV students in the Adventist missionaries abroad program. As of 2019, students have participated in providing their services in Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, and Equatorial Guinea in Africa.

The social setting of the community bordering the ULV campus is comprised of low income families. Over half of the municipal population of Pueblo Nuevo, Solistahuacán, lives in extreme poverty. Facing such conditions, the institution conducts medical brigades each semester in which it provides information services in dental, gynecology, ophthalmology, chiropractic, and preventive medicine. It also provides community services via cleaning streets, literacy programs, donations of clothing, haircuts, psychological guidance, and family counseling.

In addition, the entire region receives special pricing on tuition costs. ULV also serves the people of the area by signing collaboration agreements with local schools through which educational, cultural, and sports programs are promoted and held on campus.

The life and learning dynamics of camaraderie and preparation for life which ULV offers to students who live on campus is strengthened by manual labor in which all students participate. As an essential developmental requirement, the curriculum contemplates that students work in sheep and cattle husbandry, poultry farming, beekeeping, gardening, carpentry, ironworks, sewing, grocery market, janitorial, office work, canvassing, bakery, and food services. This manual labor, although not a part of the official academic curriculum, is essential in the students’ wholistic development.

What Remains to be Done

ULV’s growth is laudable; nonetheless, several additional areas of opportunity for growth are envisioned for the future:

- systematizing the university extensions
- collaborating with visiting professors and researchers from local and abroad universities
- utilizing the university’s natural resources in a better way
- entering the field of virtual education and a greater use of information technology
- developing more options for student financing
- mobilizing the entire university community to more efficiently fulfill the purpose of its creation

List of Directors and Presidents


**SOURCES**


Executive Power of the State of Chiapas. Agreement by which is granted Official Acknowledgement of Validation for the Bachelor's Degree in Middle and High School Education. Chiapas, Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, August 21, 2006. Linda Vista University archives, Solistahuacan, Chiapas, Mexico.


NOTES


7. Ibid.


