Inter-America: Institutional boards report on growth and plans
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Inter-America officially launches its newest institution, Herbert Fletcher University
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May 8, 2012 - Miami, Florida, United States...Libna Stevens/IAD

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IATS
The Inter-American Theological Seminary (IATS), which offers masters and doctoral degrees to its ministers throughout ten sites, boasted about its full accreditation last year by the Association of Theological Schools. IATS reported that its campus site of the Central American University in Costa Rica would now offer doctorate in ministry.

In addition, an academic master's degree was approved for the Adventist Adventist University in Puerto Rico, and plans are underway to offer a doctorate in Old Testament studies.

Dr. Jaime Castrejon, IATS president, informed board members that Haitian University needs one final approval by a special committee next month to begin offering a master's degree in pastoral ministry for French-speaking ministers throughout the territory.

IATS leaders went over strategic, curriculum and operative plans, as well as an assessment plan in the works, for its master of arts and doctoral students, territory needs and more.

GEMA Editorial House
GEMA Editorial House, which serves as Inter-America's second largest publishing house catering to the four major church regions in Mexico, reported its growth since 2010.

Erwin Gonzalez, GEMA president, and his staff reported that as of 2011, for the first time GEMA has 100 percent operating capital.

They also reported a three percent increase in sales in 2011 compared to 2010. Of these sales, 49 percent came from literature evangelists and 51% sold to church memberships. Net sales increased by 14 percent.

"We praise God for the commitment and the savings we've been able to have as well as the disciples regarding investments and inventory," said Gonzalez.

Filiberto Verduzco, treasurer of the church in Inter-America, congratulated GEMA's administrative leaders for their dedication and serious measures taken to better their finances. "We congratulate you for your tremendous efforts," said Verduzco.

New publications were presented as well as the impact these are already making in the fast consuming membership, and churches in Mexico.

Montemorelos University
As the only institution operated directly by the Inter-American Division, Montemorelos University reported its growth, upcoming program, challenges, and its current finances during its mid-year board meeting.
Ismael Castillo, president of Montemorelos University, said the institution was already working in consultation with Andrews University to launch an architectural degree on campus in the fall of 2013.

Castillo also said the university plans to increase enrollment by 12 percent over the next four years and outlined the challenges to doing that. In addition, he said university staff is studying ways to prepare for a new generation of teachers to replace the numerous professors retiring in the coming years.

The challenge to attain more funds to support the infrastructure of the university was presented.

With its television channel and radio station running daily, Montemorelos University continues to impact its surrounding community through various outreach programs in health and education.

**BHE**

The Board of Higher Education approved several degree programs to be offered in several institutions throughout Inter-America. Among the new programs, the board approved Montemorelos University's new architecture degree set to be offered next year. Authorized degrees will be sent to the General Conference for final approval.

The BHE also approved to request the International Board of Higher Education undergraduate degrees offered in Inter-American universities.

A new plan for grades K-12, includes one that will allow each union territory choose a school to become a Model School-one designed to excel in service and education among schools and institutions.

Financial incentives for these model schools will be available and other existing schools in the union territory are expected to follow after the "model school" selected.

**Resources**

IATS - [www.interamerica.org](http://www.interamerica.org)

GEMA Editorial - [www.gemaeditores.mx](http://www.gemaeditores.mx)

Montemorelos University - [www.um.edu.mx](http://www.um.edu.mx)
The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America officially launched its online educational institution yesterday in Miami, Florida, during a colorful ceremony that drew the attendance of top church leaders and educators from the 12 universities in the territory.

The newly inaugurated Herbert Fletcher University (HFU) will offer undergraduate and graduate degrees via the internet. HFU began offering courses last year, available in English and Spanish, in affiliation with Griggs University and Andrews University. The courses include master's degrees in church administration and leadership and online instruction design, and certifications in church administration and leadership, online instructional design, educational technology, and Adventist teaching.

As the special ceremony began, Pastor Israel Leito, president of the church in Inter-America, spoke words honoring the late Herbert L. Fletcher, after whom HFU is named. Fletcher was instrumental in leading Adventist education in the Inter-American Division (IAD) territory.

"Herbert Fletcher was the embodiment of what Adventist education is all about," said Pastor Leito. "His influence is still causing many men and women today to live up to the ideals of a true Christian."

Fletcher's family members were in attendance, including his widow Olive, his son and daughter and grandchildren.

"The world is better for so many because Herbert Fletcher walked this earth in fear of the Lord and did his best to help humanity," added Leito.

Herbert Fletcher served the church for more than 44 years as a teacher, district pastor, youth director, and education director. He was also president of then West Indies College in Jamaica, and later held the position of education director for the IAD for over 14 years before retiring in 1995.

"This is a signal honor, which you have so graciously bestowed upon him," said Barbara Fletcher Hundley, daughter of Herbert Fletcher, on behalf of her mother. "My entire family and I are extremely gratified that you have seen it fit to recognize His service with such a meaningful act, posthumously. This will be an indelible imprint for posterity."

During the ceremony, Dr. Ella Simmons, general vice president for the Adventist world church, brought greetings from Adventist world church president Ted N.C. Wilson as she spoke on the vision of Adventist church education.

Dr. John W. Taylor, associate education director for the Adventist world church, spoke on the growth of Adventist education since its birth in 1823. There are currently 1.6 million students studying in 111 accredited colleges and universities, and Dr. Taylor congratulated IAD leaders for
their vision and tenacity in establishing one more institution to the network of higher-learning Adventist education.

Andrews University President Dr. Niels-Erik Andreasen joined the ceremony via video conference to congratulate IAD leaders, and affirmed the partnership of Adventist University with HFU in the development of education in the IAD and the world.

"I support distance education," he said, "so long as we make certain that students have access not only to lots of information at any time, but also to teachers who can help them sort through it and make sense of it."

"God bless this new initiative," added Dr. Andreasen. "It promises to be a great blessing to the church and its members."

"With this partnership with Griggs and Andrews Universities, we can reach out to every student, member and constituency no matter where they are," said Dr. Alayne Thorpe, president of Griggs University, during the ceremony.

As Pastor Leito pronounced the acclamation of the presidential authority to HFU President Dr. David Siguelnitzky, the presentation of the ceremonial mace took place.

Dr. David Siguelnitzky, president of HFU, delivered the inaugural speech, emphasizing the commitment of HFU to "build on the deep roots of our Seventh-day Adventist principles and excel in the knowledge for our students."

Dr. Siguelnitzky reported that 64 percent of HFU professors have a PhD, 21 percent have PhD candidacy, and 14 percent have a master's degree. It's a team "many universities would dream of having," he said.

"It is not just another tertiary institution," added Dr. Siguelnitzky of HFU, "it is one that serves a different type of public." He reported that 99 current HFU students work full-time and cannot afford to move to another city or country to study.

"Mothers with children, fathers with full responsibilities...sometimes the economy of the family doesn't allow people to leave their job and educate themselves," he said. "That is the public that HFU serves today and will continue serving in the future."

Herbert Fletcher University is located in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico and joins Inter-America's 12 Adventist universities and one junior college throughout territory.

For more on Inter-America's Herbert Fletcher University, go to [http://www.hfuniversity.org/](http://www.hfuniversity.org/)

To view a photo gallery of the event, visit [http://www.flickr.com/photos/interamerica/7154696944/in/photostream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/interamerica/7154696944/in/photostream/)
Herbert Fletcher University is an online institution operated by the Inter-American Division and in affiliation with Griggs University and Andrews University.