



ALVN Conference - 2006

In June 2006, about 200 Adventist educators from 21 countries came together for the latest AVLN online conference. Since the word has so many meanings, it's important to explain what I mean by *conference*. Think registration, presenters, keynote speeches, multiple sessions, strands, facilitators, attendees, awards, and rooms. Now put all of that into an online space, and you have the 2006 AVLN Conference. But this was no typical educational conference!

This conference was unique in several very important ways. First, it was international. This flavor was captured by showing the flags of the presenters in the schedule and session descriptions. Flags commonly seen were from Mexico, Canada, the Philippines, Australia, and the United States.

Second, it was a collaboration between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking institutions. Thus, most written materials were presented in both languages. Oral presentations included translation when necessary—and conference coordinators did get better at this part as the conference progressed.

Third, the conference ended with a “megaconference”—connecting eight sites by video-conferencing technologies.

Fourth, people attended as individuals but also as groups. For instance, about 25 people met together at Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies in the Philippines, some 30 people participated in conference proceedings from Montemorelos University in Mexico, and about 15 were together at the Peruvian Union



Teachers from Montemorelos University participate in the 2006 AVLN conference.

University. Other sites with groups of people included Helderberg College (South Africa), Canadian University College (Alberta, Canada), Loma Linda University, and Walla Walla College (California and Washington, U.S.A., respectively).

Finally, the conference used multiple technologies—Voxwire for synchronous presentations and audio opportunities, Podcasts to wrap up each day, a wiki for developing collaboration ideas, and the Desire2Learn course management system (D2L) for asynchronous dialogue and organization of all conference materials, video streaming for several presentations from Montemorelos, and multi-point video conferencing for the megaconference.

The conference was organized into three blocks of presentations, given at three different times of day to accommodate the various time zones. For example, the first block catered mostly to those in the Eastern Hemisphere—the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, and

South Africa, while the third block of time was more convenient for people in the Western Hemisphere. This presentation plan worked well for those attending, but was not so well for the presenters. More than once, presenters in the Pacific time zone were up at 2 a.m. to present to colleagues who were having a relaxing evening and winding down for the day.

The conference opened with a keynote presentation by Kermit Netteburg, associate pastor of the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church (Takoma Park, Maryland), who asked the question, “What do you teach?” Since he has worked with several virtual organizations and multiple technologies, he was able to challenge us to think more deeply about this question. He helped conference participants focus on students and made it clear that collaboration was necessary to make learning happen.

The conference had four major strands—Collaboration, Faith Integra-

tion, Technology Tools, and Distance and Distributed Education. The collaboration strand was primarily a discussion where attendees shared reasons to collaborate, discussed current collaborations, identified obstacles to collaboration, and attempted some sort of formal collaboration. The ideas from this strand were organized in a wiki—a space where anyone could go and add their thoughts or edit the material. It became clear that a number of formal and informal collaborations already exist. However, many Adventist educators feel quite isolated and yearn for greater connectivity with their colleagues. There is also a need to connect different levels in our system—especially connecting academies with colleges and universities. Shelley Bacon shared the concept of Accelerated College Enrollment (ACE), where students in academies can be involved in college-level learning while still in high school.

The Faith Integration strand was presented by Don Roy from Australia and Raquel Korniecjuk, who works at Montemorelos University but gave her presentation from Ghana where she was attending the General Conference-sponsored Christ in the Classroom faith integration conference. Both presenters drew participants toward notions of “wholeness” and “integration,” encouraging members to make their faith pervasive throughout the curriculum, and not simply tacked on here and there.

The Technology Tools strand showcased and provided demonstrations of tools like Breeze, Moodle, Desire2Learn, and others. The focus for all these sessions was how various tech tools can help enhance learning and collaboration.

The Distance and Distributed Education strand focused on assessment of online experiences, characteristics of online students, how to start a distance-education program, motivating your online students, and more!

It is AVLN’s custom to give two awards—one to an individual who has



Sam Young

demonstrated a powerful spirit of networking and collaboration in Adventist education.

This award was given to Sam Young from La Sierra University (Riverside, California) for his work in making the North American Division common course management system project happen (Desire2Learn). The other award—given to an institution that has demonstrated a strong collaborative spirit—went to Montemorelos University for its collaboration with AVLN since its inception, and specifically for its cooperation in the past year to bring AVLN resources and the online conference to Latin America.

In the spirit of AVLN, the 2006 Online Conference was a huge success because so many people helped. Tech support was available 24 hours a day, and many people helped facilitate sessions and translate. Next year, we hope YOU will participate and become a



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member of AVLN. The Adventist Virtual Learning Network really is a network, and each connection makes Adventist education stronger. Please check out the AVLN Website: <http://www.avln.org> for resources to help with your online program. ✍

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