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The Role of Catholic Universities

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- ***Catholic universities must be, above all, universities, that is to say, institutions devoted to the three-fold mission attributed to every university:*** teaching, research and knowledge transfer.
- These functions are in full force today and stemming from them, **universities must be redefined** as places that are **in constant change**, which must contribute to the transformation of society and collaborate in solving the problems that affect us, actively committing to the great challenges of our times.

- **When Universities fulfill their functions, they fulfill their mission of being communities for Evangelization**, participating in the life of the **wider Christian community** and collaborating with the Church, local and universal.
- The importance of having a **good faculty of theology** for a Catholic university, well interrelated with the rest of the centers of the same university.



Being a Community

- Being a "community" does not dilute the importance of **good governance**: with a well-oiled chain of command, to make accurate diagnoses and to take decisions that are subsequently carried out.
- And also implies, necessarily, a **recognition and appreciation of the diversity of tasks** –all necessary– around a common and shared mission, that calls to create a **context of co-responsibility**.
- We can sustain ourselves because there is a **horizon** of university **quality**, with **identity** and **mission**.

- The university community, in addition, is not only something that must be built and reinforced within the walls of the university, but it is **an active subject vis-à-vis external reality, in relation to social and cultural contexts.**
- They are called to act as an **instrument of social transformation** and continuous improvement, providing people and culture with the values that are necessary to build a fraternal society, steeped in solidarity.
- Although some are **trying to make us irrelevant** in a society that gives priority to the State-run and the public domains, where it seems that being religious and a university is contradictory, **our active presence and participation are even more necessary.**

- We face huge global problems (climate change, refugees, extreme poverty, growing inequality ...) and **universities must take on a role of social leadership to address these problems through open and connected innovation with regard to society.**
- This contribution to social transformation requires that the various university **functions** relate to each other, since the **university is the product –not the sum– of the three**, so if one does not exist, neither does the final outcome.

- Our university commitment is reflect upon the future, **not to stop scientific and technological progress** but to *discern how to be human* in the new and unknown scenarios and in the horizon of the common good,
- for the goal of an inclusive prosperity is needed a deep **inter(cross)disciplinary conversation** **within the Social Doctrine of the Church** (SDC) to *rethink the anthropologic meaning of technological progress* within the new technological paradigm

- Today the **framework and horizons** for education/training and research in all academic fields are provided by the United Nations Sustainable Development **Agenda 2030**, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), and the proposal of "**integral ecology**" by Pope Francis LS.
- The 2030 Agenda highlights themes and guidelines, while "**integral ecology**" places them at the depth of Anthropology and Spirituality.

- **“Integral ecology”** does ask that we hear "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor" (LS, 49), and sets before our eyes the **inseparability** of "the concern for nature, justice with the poor, the commitment to society and inner peace"(LS, 10), and the analysis “of environmental problems and human, family, work, and urban contexts, and the relationship of each person with himself/herself”(LS, 141).



DIGITALIZATION

Universities need to **incorporate digital technologies to boost new organizational models and take advantage of the capabilities** they provided us to undertake the necessary transformations that allow us **to properly participate in this new digital scenario.**

- Not a simple mutation towards the digital in our processes, but as a real and profound change in the cultural and organizational paradigm and in the way of undertaking university missions.

- The new generations of students, university professionals and society in general have new vital, academic and professional expectations.
- It requires a **large-scale transformation** of the university to respond to the challenges, without losing “its soul”.
- It is strictly necessary for **university government teams** to be aware of this change in approach to the organizational and cultural model that digital transformation implies.

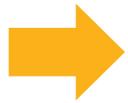


RESEARCH

Our challenge is to response with **useful, transforming, networked and inter(trans)-disciplinary research** on crucial issues, in line with the mission of the Church.

Human and material resources are scarce/Needs are many → **Choices must be made**

- from a **realistic perspective** of taking into account specific circumstances and contemplating the usefulness and transformative effects that research may have on the **lives of people**, especially those **most in need**.
- combining scientific **recognition** and **transformative** effects.



TRAINING

We **do not want** to train people who are simple **“reproducers” of an economic and social system** needed of profound reforms.

If we are clear on who we are, the proximity to business and professional fields allow us to meet creatively the educational and training needs demanded by society.

- By learning **transversal competences** given by **non-cognitive skills**.
- Through courses that ask students to build off **quantitative and technical skills to develop the social cognition** needed to make **values-based decisions** and lead in a complex, multi-layered world.
- By incorporating a **cross-disciplinary view** into the curriculum, students examine the very purpose of key business functions and learn how to find new solutions to complex problems.

- By embracing **big ideals**, such as justice, individual liberty, integrity, subsidiarity coming from SDC, and requiring students **to grapple with uncomfortable questions** about the tensions between these ideals and **business/professional practices**

➔ *open to **reality** and humanity with great ideals and commitment to the small.*

- The growing relevance of technology precisely requires a **humanistic education** that gives sense to the changes that technology is producing

➔ ***Christian anthropology** to reach professors and researchers and through them to students*

In **four qualifiers** in my Jesuit tradition we synthesize today the training we aspire to:

- 1 **Competent**, professionally speaking, because they have an academic background that allows them to know rigorously the advances of science and technology.
- 2 **Conscious**, because in addition to knowing themselves, thanks to the development of their capacity for internalization and the cultivation of spiritual life, they have a consistent knowledge and experience of society and its imbalances.

- 3 Compassionate**, because they are able to open their hearts to be supportive and empathize with the suffering others experience.
- 4 Committed**, because being compassionate, they are honestly committed, from faith and with peaceful means, in the social and political transformation of their countries and social structures to achieve justice”.



I truly believe

that **our Catholic Universities**, when they have been able to keep their quality, are **among the institutions best prepared** in our countries to offer students this **multidimensional and comprehensive, well-rounded learning**, effectively incorporating educational innovation.

In the coming years we will have to **make an important effort**: a firm commitment to **educational innovation**, providing **resources** and **choosing** what to **research** and how to go about it, with a view to the horizon of **sustainable development / integral ecology**

being aware of **our public role as Catholic institutions in the life of society** as a whole, in which many **alumni** stand out for their achievements

In sum creating

“value with values”

Thanks
for your attention

