

Institutional Profiles

A NEW HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN CHILE: UNIVERSIDAD ALBERTO HURTADO, S.J.

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In 1995, the Universidad Alberto Hurtado will be founded by the Chilean Province of the Society of Jesus. This effort forms part of an initiative to increase the presence of the Society of Jesus in Chilean society, and in the wider Latin American context. In this brief article, we will set out for the readership of the newsletter the "short history" of the development of the University, and some of the more delicate foundational issues. The University is only in the initial stages of its development. As yet, it does not officially exist. At the present time, the statutes for the University have been approved by the Superior General of the Jesuits. In May, the Statutes for the University will be presented officially to the National Council of Higher Education in Chile.

Institutional Origins

In 1955, the then General of the Society of Jesus, Father Janssens decided to establish Centers for Research and Social Action (CIAS, Centro de investigación y acción social) throughout Latin America in order to better respond to the challenges of the period, especially the poverty of the region. These CIAS were charged with the mission of engaging in social research, direct action programs among the poor, and consultancy with Church organizations that sought to renew their pastoral activities among the poor. In the Chilean Province, as in many other national Provinces in Latin America, young Jesuits were selected to pursue special studies in the social sciences and education in the United States and Europe in order to take up positions as researchers and professionals in the CIAS. Upon their return, the work began. In Chile, research and social action at the regional CIAS was begun, and the Jesuits were instrumental in the founding of the faculties of sociology and psychology in the Catholic University of Chile in the 1960s in order that young people might be educated in the social science and humanities. Within 10 years of its founding, the need for increased specialization became apparent, and the CIAS in Santiago underwent an interesting institutional evolution in which more specialized independent academic centers were established.

The Latin American Institute for Doctrine and Social Studies (ILADES, Instituto latinoamericano de doctrina y estudios sociales) was founded in 1965 as an expression of

the concern of the Church for the social problems of the continent. ILADES, a teaching and research institution, organizes its work in four academic departments: economics, social sciences, research and labor relations (DIAL), and Catholic social teaching. Presently, ILADES offers an M.A. in economics in cooperation with Georgetown University, and a Licentiate in social sciences in cooperation with the Gregorian University in Rome. DIAL and the Department of Catholic Social Teaching offer shorter courses in their areas of specialization.

The Center for Research and Development of Education (CIDE, Centro de investigación y desarrollo de la educación) was created in 1964, as a technical assistance center for Catholic primary and secondary schools in Chile. Eventually, CIDE's activities expanded to include a wide range of more formal education programs among teachers and students in schools, and more informal programs among adults in a wide range of social organizations. CIDE has developed a solid reputation as a research institution, tackling complex problems that affect the poor in Chile and in Latin America. CIDE also has developed the Latin American Documentation and Information Service (REDUC, Red latinoamericana de documentación e información en educación) which has developed specialized education information and research products for regional education researchers and for decision makers at the ministerial level of governments in Latin America.

The Center for Socio-Cultural Research (CISOC, Centro de investigación socio-cultural), which dates from 1958, is the original research unit of the CIAS, continues to offer research and technical assistance to the Catholic church in its effort to renew its pastoral priorities and methods. In addition to these specialized research and action centers, CIAS sponsors *Mensaje* magazine, a monthly publication of opinion that was founded by Blessed Father Alberto Hurtado, S.J. in 1951. *Mensaje* manages to bring together the distinct interests of the Jesuit-sponsored institutions in order to offer critical opinion on issues of public policy. During the years of the military dictatorship (1973-1990), *Mensaje* became one of the few publications capable of maintaining a critical voice in the face of often violent political oppression.

Jesuit Involvement in Higher Education: An Historical Perspective

The Jesuits of the Chilean Province have a tradition of involvement in higher education, both in the areas of teaching and administration. The Catholic University of Valparaiso was under the direction of the Jesuits from 1952-1966, and the Society has had an active role in the administration of Universidad del Norte in the northern city of Antofagasta since 1956. In addition to these past and present administrative roles, Jesuits have been professors in universities and seminaries in Chile, with special attention to providing highly qualified teaching staff for the Faculty of

Theology of the Catholic University of Chile.

Institutional Evolution: Universidad Alberto Hurtado, S.7.

The development of the independent academic centers described above and the modality of Jesuit involvement in higher education must continue to evolve in order “to achieve the ends for which they were created.” The mission of the original CIAS, in large part inspired by Alberto Hurtado, S.J., sought to stress the gospel and promote social justice, thereby anticipating by 10 years the concerns expressed in *Gaudiamet Spes* at the Second Vatican Council and reaffirmed by the documents of the General Congregation XXXI. This mission, which has been confirmed by the Society and the wider Church, remains a vital part of the mission of the Chilean Province, but in order to carry out that mission more effectively, its institutional base must evolve. Father Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society commented to the ILADES Director, Fr. Gonzalo Arroyo, S.J., during his visit to Rome in September 1994 to promote the university, that academic centers and universities must continually change or they will simply perish. Father General stressed that the foundation of a Jesuit University in Santiago by the Chilean Province is a step in that evolutionary process.

Why is the foundation of a Jesuit university in Santiago seen as part of the evolution of the mission of the Chilean Province? While independent academic centers like ILADES, CIDE, and CISOC enjoyed support from Church, private, and government funding agencies in Europe and in the United States during the years of the Pinochet dictatorship, in the wake of the return to democracy in Chile, that international funding has suffered drastic reductions. Thus, a university would allow the generation of income that would offer increased economic stability for the important work of the independent academic centers. At the same time, it is our belief that those independent academic centers in Chile—which have managed to maintain a stable research tradition—will become increasingly less “academic,” eventually evolving into centers that either execute programs for government and/or private agencies, or provide consultancy and specialized technical assistance to diverse organizations. In our view, research and teaching activities will become increasingly concentrated in the University.

A second reason for the foundation of the University concerns the challenge to place the knowledge and experience of our independent academic centers at the disposal of undergraduate students, “professionals-in-service” and policymakers. The academic programs of the Universidad Alberto Hurtado will emerge from the knowledge and experience of these centers. The emergence of the independent academic centers should be seen in historical perspective. While university faculties of social sciences were weakened significantly by a policy of “cleansing” dur-

ing the years following the military coup in 1973, some of the academics who remained in the country began to be hired by the Jesuit centers. Thus, these Jesuit centers, in a national academic environment characterized by a weakness of research in the social sciences, have managed to accumulate significant experience in research and teaching. The university is seen as the most appropriate institutional base for placing this accumulation of knowledge and experience at the service of undergraduates, “professionals-in-service,” and policymakers.

As we described above, ILADES, much more than CIDE or CISOC, has been involved in graduate-level teaching in economics and in the social sciences. CIDE and CISOC have operated almost exclusively within the framework of research and action projects, funded by international agencies—living, as it were, “from one project to the next.” The knowledge base of CIDE and CISOC will be transformed into graduate academic programs over the next two years in order to be integrated into the university.

A third reason for founding the University is the increasing globalization of the academic world. The entrance of Chile into the North American Free Trade Agreement in the course of the next few years, will have broad impact, not only on the management of the economy and the insertion of Chilean goods into global markets, but also on the level of cooperation between universities, especially in the areas of formulation and implementation of public policy. Founding the University, and stipulating a strong policy orientation to research and teaching at the graduate level will better guarantee an active participation in the network of universities that are concerned about issues of public policy. In addition, international links with the network of Jesuit universities will be of vital importance to Universidad Alberto Hurtado.

A fourth reason for the foundation of a university is the need to expand the commitment of the Chilean Province and of the Society of Jesus to the most marginalized sectors of society. Richard Bamett and John Cavanaugh comment in their book *Global Dreams*² that the 300 top firms control up to 25 percent of the world’s capital. In order for the Chilean Province to rise to the challenge for the promotion of justice and equity in Chilean society, it is no longer sufficient to develop grassroots organization as a response to Decree 4 of GC XXXII. In order to carry out this mandate more comprehensively, the Chilean Province has chosen to develop the University, which may influence the field of public policy.

A fifth reason for the development of the University is the increasing “devaluation of education” in Chilean society. It has been observed that increasingly higher levels of education are being demanded in the job market for entry-level positions in all sectors. Traditionally, the Jesuit secondary schools in Chile exerted great influence in society

since they educated an “elite within an elite.” Up until 30 years ago, enrollment in secondary education (both private and public education) in Chile was only 20 percent of school-age children. Jesuit secondary students were found within that 20 percent of school-age children, thus constituting an “elite within an elite.” Through the education of this elite at the secondary level, in a small country, the Jesuit managed to have a significant influence on Chilean society. This scenario has changed radically. Coverage levels at the secondary education level have increased to better than 80 percent in Chile, and the distinction, “graduate of a Jesuit high school” has decreased in importance. Thus, the Universidad Alberto Hurtado is a direct response to the trend of “devaluation of education” because it seeks to offer undergraduate and graduate education with an Ignatian trademark for a student population that demands even higher levels of education and professionalization to enter important positions in the workplace.

The foundation and development of Jesuit universities throughout the history of the Society of Jesus have been highly varied processes that, while they may not have obeyed a series of laws of institutional development, have been characterized by certain trends. Academic program development has tended to follow two general principles in its evolution: from “trivium to quadrivium” (generally, from “the college” [philosophy/theology] to the arts and other sciences), and from lower degrees of specialization to higher ones (undergraduate program development opening later in the graduate level). Universidad Alberto Hurtado, rather than follow these more traditional evolutionary principles, has developed programs that are closely related to the specialized expertise of the Jesuit independent academic centers, which form the “knowledge base” of the University. The initial strength of Universidad Alberto Hurtado will be its professional graduate programs in distinct disciplines. Philosophy and theology will be incorporated, at least initially, in the degree to which they offer a basis for critical ethical thinking in each of the professional areas.

It should be recalled that the original idea of bringing together the independent academic centers as a university consisted of creating a free-standing graduate faculty. However, the norms of the Chilean Council for Higher Education do not permit the establishment of such graduate faculties. Thus, the University has been obliged to offer undergraduate education. At the same time, the Council does not establish a prescribed ratio of undergraduate to graduate programs, or of the number of undergraduate to graduate students. Thus, as will be the case with Universidad Alberto Hurtado, one undergraduate program will be offered initially in economics and business, but the number and type of graduate programs will be developed independently, based strictly on the expertise of the independent academic centers.

Initially, graduate programs will concentrate on the following areas:

- M.A. in economics (in cooperation with Georgetown University);
- M.A. in the social sciences with a specialization in Catholic social teaching (in cooperation with Gregorian University);
- M.A. in Latin American studies;
- M.A. in business administration (in cooperation with Loyola College, Baltimore);
- Executive Diploma in business administration;
- Graduate Diploma in educational dimension of social program development (in cooperation with Loyola College, Baltimore); and
- M.A. in early childhood and school transition.

Eventually, the University would like to offer a serious program in communications, an area in which the Society has considerable practical experience, but lacks serious academic competence. The undergraduate program to be offered will be in economics and business, in order to move those students toward graduate-level study in those fields.

Future Developments

The early stages of development of an enterprise such as a university are filled with risks. In order to control those risks, the Society of Jesus in Chile has decided to build the University on the foundation of the academic expertise of its independent academic centers, even though this type of development means a significant departure from more traditional models of development of Jesuit universities.

In the future, Universidad Alberto Hurtado will begin to develop academic agreements with Jesuit institutions around the world, beginning with the universities and colleges of the Maryland Province, with which the Chilean province has a long-standing and continually evolving “twinning agreement.” On the basis of these cooperative links, Universidad Alberto Hurtado will be able to expand its educational offerings, and improve the quality of the education it imparts.

NOTES

¹ “Professionals-in-service” are that group of potential students who are working, and who at the same time, desire to pursue graduate education. This will be a special target group of the graduate programs of the University.

² Richard J. Barnett and John Cavanaugh, *Global Dreams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).