

ing and expanding graduate programs that were attractive to internationals and in providing some campus-based support for international graduate students.

An important word of caution for the future: several responders suggested that the overall enrollment picture on campus might be masking a real drop in the number of new admissions, especially at the undergraduate level, for students from the Asian tiger nations. One medium-sized southern institution reported that a major gap was developing between total students overall and new admissions totals. For example, while total Indonesian enrollments showed a 6 percent increase, a 20 percent decrease was seen in new admissions; Malaysia showed a 6 percent overall increase and a 40 percent decrease in new students; and among Thai students there was a 10 percent overall increase and a 55 percent drop in first-time enrollments. Another moderate-sized institutional respondent noted that "the increase in our international population is due to employment layoffs in the home countries. Many students are viewing this time as an opportunity to continue their education and to improve their level of education—preparing to reenter the work force when it regains its stability."

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***These findings suggest that the 5.1 percent enrollment jump for the fall 1997 reflects the continued attraction of U.S. higher education for international students despite the widely reported Asian economic turmoil.***

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These survey findings suggest that the enrollment increases seen in fall 1997 are likely to persist into 1998. While it should give observers comfort that the Asian flu has not turned into pneumonia, the findings also point to the importance of institutional responsiveness in abating the effects of global financial dislocation. Institutions that acted proactively to retain enrolled Asian students, recruited aggressively both within Asia and beyond, and instituted institutional systems and programs that are responsive to the needs of international students appear to have expanded their international enrollments. ■

*Open Doors 1997/98* can be ordered from IIE Books at 800-445-0443 toll free in U.S. or by e-mail from <iiebooks@pmds.com>. The new edition may be purchased at the IIE Online Bookstore: <http://www.iiebooks.org> or from Amazon.com.

## Coordinating Latin American Higher Education Reform: IESALC

**Luis Yarzabal**

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In Latin America, broad and growing consensus exists that in future societies will depend to a large extent on their capacity to generate new knowledge. Scientific research and technological development, as well as the ability to adopt and adapt new technologies, are strategies in the effort to increase competitiveness in the world economy and to achieve greater collective well-being. Universities, the traditional locus of research in the region, are being challenged to help countries stimulate economic growth and ensure a sustained and equitable process of development. But unless universities themselves engage in a comprehensive process of transformation, they will have limited capacity to become key actors in social and economic development. The formidable task ahead requires a redefinition of policies, plans, guiding principles, innovation in programs and curricula, and strengthening of management capacity. In sum, institutions must commit themselves to significant change and engage in a process of comprehensive restructuring.

In November 1996, a regional conference organized by UNESCO's Regional Center for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean—now the International Institute for Higher Education (IESALC)—was held in Havana, Cuba. The conference was attended by 700 participants; conference proceedings, including 132 papers, keynote speeches, and reports, have been published in Spanish, English, and French. A follow-up Caribbean meeting was held in June 1998, with some 50 participants from the region.

A regional plan of action emerged from these meetings and has been a major undertaking of IESALC. The Plan addresses actions along five major issues:

1. *Improving the Relevance of Postsecondary Education.* The plan of action identifies education in general, and higher education in particular, as essential instruments, of strategic value, to cope with the challenges of the modern world and to prepare citizens capable of building a fairer and more open society, based on solidarity, respect of human rights, and the shared use of knowledge and information. Higher education should contribute to social and economic development, as well as participate in the struggle against poverty and the promotion of the culture of peace.

2. *Improving Quality.* The plan calls for a commitment

to the true essence and work of higher education. Here it should be remembered that the quality of higher education is a multidimensional concept, which relates to the nature of institutions and areas of knowledge and must be viewed within the framework of national, regional, and local priorities.

3. *Improvement of Management and Financing Capacity.* Given the importance of higher education for development, the Plan acknowledges the unavoidable responsibility of the state in its financing. The Plan calls for streamlining and reforming the management of institutions at all levels and diversifying their sources of financing, based on research on higher education. Systems and institutions need to be assisted in identifying present challenges and future trends, to allow them to respond swiftly and effectively to occurrences in different fields.

4. *Putting the New Information and Communication Technologies to Work for Higher Education.* Countries of the region need to be encouraged to make the necessary investments in support of an adequate infrastructure in telecommunications and teleinformatics to provide the higher education community with flexible and cheap connections to the global networks. Higher education institutions should be urged to integrate the new technologies in all areas of their work.

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***IESALC will work with institutions seeking change, to redirect the course of higher education and development.***

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5. *Reformulating International Cooperation.* The plan calls for a reappraisal of international cooperation. The development of higher education and science and technology should be oriented toward the intellectual, cultural, scientific, technological, humanistic, and social capacities of the region. A new framework of international collaboration will make possible the launching of innovative programs in research, teaching, and social analysis.

IESALC will focus its resources on higher education reform in the region, and on the achievement of the objectives set forth in the plan of action. IESALC will promote interinstitutional collaboration, curricular reform, and the establishment of evaluation and accreditation systems; sponsor a continuous program of research in the field; and provide technical expertise for the construction of reliable higher education information systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. But most importantly, IESALC will work with institutions seeking change, to redirect the course of higher education and development in the region. ■

## Resources for Latin American Higher Education Research

### Liz Reisberg

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During the past several years UNESCO's Centro regional para la educación superior en América Latina y el Caribe (CRESALC) has made a significant bibliographical contribution to the available information about higher education in Latin America. (CRESALC has recently been upgraded to an institute.) For the most part, the books below resulted from UNESCO-sponsored symposia that brought together prominent scholars to discuss current trends in higher education and the challenges ahead. The discussions considered issues of common concern to the region as well as the experiences of individual countries and specific institutions. Much of the dialogue at these meetings has been compiled into several new volumes and provides important reference material to guide further research and conversation. Most of the other books listed are aggregations of essays collected from researchers, policymakers, university administrators, and government officials. Several issues recur in these volumes: international cooperation and regional integration, the incorporation of new technology, effective systems of evaluation and accreditation, and the social role of the university. For more information about these publications, contact: Centro regional para la educación superior en América Latina y el Caribe (CRESALC), Apartado Postal No. 68.394, Caracas 1060-A, Venezuela

*Formación pedagógica de docentes de educación superior en América Latina y el Caribe.* Caracas: CRESALC, August 1998. 452 pp. ISBN: 980-6048-76-8.

This book contains a collection of 23 articles on the training and professional development of university professors. Most articles focus on experiences throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, with the exception of one that addresses efforts in Africa.

*Universidad y mundo productivo,* edited by Gustavo López Ospina. Caracas: UNESCO/CRESALC, 1994. 197 pp. ISBN: 980-6226-88-7.

This book contains four case studies that examine the relationship between the university and the business sector in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela, with an overview and introduction by the editor.