that students would be required to pass before enrolling in
the predegree program. His goal was to limit the program
to those students who had a good possibility of passing it.
The aptitude test contributed to the tensions that led to
the strike. Open access and free higher education are sa-
cred in much of Latin America and certainly in Ecuador.
Arrobo challenged both ideals and succeeded in introduc-
ing new approaches.

CONCLUSION
This article doesn’t begin to describe the complexity of the
reforms these two rectors have undertaken. What is in-
tended here is to highlight that new economic models have
become central to the higher education equation. Yet the
extreme financial constraints have made it possible for these
two rectors to challenge certain characteristics of public
higher education that have been considered “untouchable”
in this century. There seems to be a new and more practi-
cal attitude on campus that makes difficult reforms pos-
sible. No one—administrators, professors, or
students—wants to settle for the alternative: an education
inadequate to the demands of a modern and global future.

The University and
Integration in Latin America

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One of the most important events in Latin American
academia in 1996 was the Regional Conference on
Politics and Strategies in the Transformation of Higher
Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized
by UNESCO’s Regional Center for Higher Education in
Latin America and the Caribbean (CRESALC). Interna-
tional cooperation was the major issue on the agenda. The
main outcome of the conference was the realization that
Latin American and Caribbean higher education institu-
tions will have to merge their efforts in order to overcome
the obstacles they face. Commission Five was entrusted with
the formulation of a proposal for reorienting international
cooperation in the field of higher education.

The current Latin American context and its overall
problems require analyzing several historical patterns of coopera-
tion and, more particularly, the recent horizontally developed experiences.

Cooperation must then be geared toward surpassing
existing asymmetries and establishing collaboration. It’s very
important to work within priority areas and proactive hori-
zontal structures sharing resources, thus enabling innova-
tive research, teaching, and coordination programs. CRESALC would seem to be the coordinating organiza-
tion best suited to monitor and promote exchange intensi-
ﬁcation among higher education institutions by coupling
its actions with the already existing networks and associa-
tions, and adapting its own structure and functions.

Using this context as a frame of reference, the com-
mission recommended that:
• universities channel a speciﬁc portion of their budget
toward horizontal regional cooperation;
• a web of networks be established emanating from the
different joint experiences developed in the region—
such as the Montevideo Group, the Amazonian, the
Caribbean, and the Central American universities;
• academic consortia be fostered to share the requisite
resources for cooperation;
• environment and sustainable development be made the
top priorities of cooperation; and
• new social actors—i.e., gender, ethnic, linguistic, and
class minorities—be actively involved in higher edu-
cation change processes.

The commission also unanimously decided that
CRESALC should be reconstituted into an autonomous
institution for higher education in Latin America and the
Caribbean. This new body will act as (1) an information,
database and research center for the Latin American and
Caribbean higher education system, and (2) a collegiate
body of horizontal collaboration and cooperation where
the continent’s new cultural and intellectual capital will be
developed and reproduced.