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UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES (UNIANDES): A UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABLE RESEARCH

A conversation with **PABLO NAVAS**, president of Universidad de los Andes (UNIANDES)



Universidad de los Andes (UNIANDES) is focused on high-quality teaching, social inclusion and sustainable research. Publishing more than 1,000 articles in Scopus each year, its excellence stems from experienced faculty and talented students both at the undergraduate and graduate level. Based in Bogotá, the university is open to collaboration, shown by the proportion of its publications with international networks. University president, Pablo Navas, explains how UNIANDES plans to make Colombia a world-class research destination.

How does UNIANDES innovate in education?

Universidad de los Andes is a liberal, non-profit university that focuses on well-rounded education, with an emphasis on humanistic and scientific thinking. We are in the process of curricular development, focusing on intensive research activities with professors and students, flexibility and interdisciplinarity. Reforms will enhance the connections between teaching and research, promoting students' autonomy. UNIANDES is an increasingly international university with more than 339 undergraduate students and 112 international professors. I believe this is the most important effort we have recently made to improve education.

How is UNIANDES engaged with promoting social inclusion?

We are committed to make UNIANDES the most inclusive university in Colombia. Moreover, our goal is to become a blind-admission university, benefiting from the best minds, regardless of economic and social conditions. We have a vice-presidency role for development and alumni, in charge of fundraising. We are devoted to obtaining funds for talented students who cannot afford our tuition fees. We have created a scholarship

program called Quiero Estudiar, based on the principle of reciprocity. The students sign a reciprocity agreement that, in the future, they will help other students to realize the same aspirations they are being helped to achieve.

What are the strategies used by UNIANDES to achieve excellence in research?

We measure our results and impact by international standards. We also strongly believe in research networks, and our most cited publications result from international collaborations. Our office of international affairs identifies strategic partners worldwide with which we promote exchanges.

How does UNIANDES contribute to local or regional issues?

UNIANDES has started to work in different regions of the country. We renewed dialogue with regional universities, NGOs, and local mayors and governors. We aim to collaborate on regional strategic planning. We are also engaged in strengthening our community-based research to understand and respond to local needs. We signed an agreement with the network of national natural parks and are establishing field stations throughout the country. The

first one we are creating, and will offer to the research community, is located on the Nevados natural park in the Paramo, a unique Andean ecosystem. These field stations will contribute to sustainable local development through interdisciplinary research.

What have been some of UNIANDES's recent collaborations and networks?

Our most important research network is our most recent one. We have signed an agreement with Pontificia Universidad de Católica Chile and with Tecnológico de Monterrey. We believe that these collaborations, in research, technological innovations and education, will be disruptive and innovative. At a local level, we have signed significant agreements with Agrosavia to contribute to Colombia's agricultural development. Agrosavia is a joint public-private, decentralized, not-for-profit institution for scientific and technical discovery. The corporation's purpose is generating scientific knowledge and developing agricultural technologies. We host three Max Planck Tandem groups, in computational biology, computational physics and international law. We also participate in global initiatives in high-energy physics through CERN and Fermilab.

We host an International Mixed Laboratory, funded by the French Institute IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement) and in collaboration with the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Ecuador (PUCE) to develop collaborative research in the study and protection of Andean ecosystems. We are also very proud to host the South American center for the study of the Sustainable Development Goals, one of the Jeffrey Sachs initiative centers.

What are some examples of impact case studies developed by the university?

We are strengthening our technology transfer strategy. We are developing patents and products that are being transferred to society. Also, some of our innovations have been adopted by several Colombian institutions. For example, the classification of products developed by professors from the schools of Architecture and Design and Arts and Humanities was transferred to Colciencias. The first digital computer in Colombia was installed at UNIANDES, revolutionizing research.



Pablo Palacios, a PhD Student in Biological Sciences focusing on evolutionary ecology, is one of the researchers from Universidad de los Andes who described a new species of poison frog: *Andinobates victimatus*.

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