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International Association of Universities (IAU), founded in 1950, is the leading global association of higher education institutions and university associations. It convenes and connects 600 Members from around 130 countries to identify, reflect and act on common priorities.

IAU partners with UNESCO and other international, regional and national bodies active in higher education **and serves as the Global Voice of Higher Education.**

THE UNIVERSITY: SHAPING VALUES AND SHAPED BY VALUES

Perhaps we are finally awakening from the fairy tale dream of this new century and getting ready to face the current situation and its significant challenges. There is only one way to confront them: through education and research imbued with values. Because addressing the challenges of humanity requires not only well educated citizens, but also those with a solid foundation of values.

Through values-driven teaching and research that place universal values such as human rights, peace, democracy, freedom, equality, inclusivity, and sustainability at the core of their activities, Universities can make a significant impact to reverse the current situation.

However, simply stating values in the strategic plans does not suffice as commitment. We must integrate these values into practice through the learning process and research endeavours. However, to succeed, universities must operate in a framework of institutional autonomy [1], academic freedom and integrity[2], and with adequate funding. While this may seem obvious to academia and universities, it is not always guaranteed. Even when these conditions are met, there is always room for improvement, as achieving these ideals is an ongoing process, not a final destination.

But how can universities put values into practice? There is no one-size-fits-all approach, each university must identify the most suitable method that aligns with its environment. However, I believe there are some fundamental actions that should be pursued as a continuous cyclical process:

- Provide training for academia, technical, and administrative staff on values and their integration, emphasizing their application in daily actions along with the incorporation of a values-driven perspective into teaching and research.
- Establish transversal competences related to values across all programmes and define their learning outcomes for assessing these competences.
- Conduct research on values as a core discipline within universities.
- Set up metrics and indicators to monitor the efficacy of teaching and research from a values-driven perspective.
- Incorporate protocols into internal quality assessment procedures to ensure the best introduction of values-driven teaching and research.

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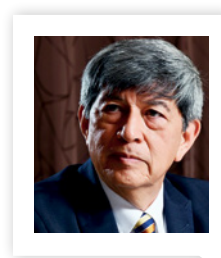
All these actions will not only be much more efficient and effective if we work together, but collaboration is the only way to carry them out. Even the largest universities are too small to tackle significant challenges alone. Only through collaboration will we be able to discover multiple solutions stemming from diverse cultural perspectives and world views. By its very nature, internationalization serves as a means to promote universal values and mutual understanding.

Since 2018, one of the objectives of the University of Andorra’s[3] strategic plan has been to “Promote democratic values, transparency, openness, integration and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”. To implement this objective, we have introduced a new teaching methodology entirely based on competences. Traditional subjects have been transformed into more transversal modules, and we have incorporated three core transversal competences: democratic culture, multilingualism, and the SDGs.

Simultaneously, we have developed an Equality Plan and an Inclusion Plan, and we offer short programmes for academia and staff to deepen their understanding of these plans and to align their actions with them in daily activities, teaching, and research[4].

Based on my experience at a very small university, I firmly believe that nothing should hinder anyone from actively contributing to solutions for major challenges through values-driven teaching and research. Neither size, funding, geography, nor any other factor should deter us from taking action. By collaborating, we can overcome all our limitations and achieve success together.

31 Universities and Values in a Global Context



by **Fernando Leon-Garcia**, President, CETYS University, Mexico and IAU Administrative Board Member

In today’s global landscape, universities face numerous challenges that transcend geographical boundaries, and include social tension, economic and environmental uncertainty, as well as polarization, politicization, and populism. To navigate these complexities, universities must embody and promote essential values. Recent events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas conflict, and changes in an increasing number of democracies serve as poignant examples of how universities need to reflect, review, and respond to global crises.

A recent article on “Navigating university neutrality is not so simple anymore” (University World News, June 15, 2024) by Hans de Wit and Philip Altbach points out that it would be an understatement to say that the academic community has had difficulty in coming to grips with the current wave of political activism and the societal and political reaction to it.

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Indeed, in “United We Stand: An Urgent Call for Leadership” (AGB Trusteeship Magazine, Volume 31, Number 5, September/October 2023), Ellen-Earle Chaffee indicates that there are ideological and political intrusions that are mounting against freedom in higher education and democracy is a high-stakes opportunity to impact the outcome of history.

Hans de Wit and Philip Altbach suggest that higher education and society at large have become much more complicated and intertwined in recent decades, with far more internationalization of both society and higher education than in the past, accompanied by a strong anti-international, nationalist reaction. Ignoring pressures from domestic politicians, foreign governments and a diverse and globalized academic community is no longer possible.

Universities are unique in their role as hubs of diverse perspectives, designed to challenge individuals and foster critical thinking. This diversity of thought is a strength, but it requires a commitment to creating environments where students feel safe to explore, debate, and learn from conflicting perspectives. Respect, tolerance, and openness are fundamental values that must underpin all interactions within the academic community. Universities must ensure that all members of their community feel valued and heard, regardless of their viewpoints, fostering a culture of intellectual curiosity and growth (Globalization’s Impact on Education, n.d.; The Five Major Challenges Impacting Universities in 2023).

The mission of universities extends beyond academic instruction. It involves educating the whole individual, morally and ethically, as well as intellectually. Every moment is a learning opportunity, especially during times of conflict. Universities have the responsibility to channel student energy and enthusiasm into positive actions and learning experiences, helping them become well-rounded individuals equipped to navigate complex global issues (Transformation of Higher Education After the COVID Disruption, 2020).

Universities must also maintain and promote traditional academic values such as autonomy, academic freedom, and research integrity. Autonomy allows universities to make independent decisions that reflect their values and mission. Academic freedom protects the right to teach, learn, and research without undue interference, ensuring that universities remain places of free thought and inquiry. Research integrity upholds the highest standards of honesty and ethics in research, contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of academic institutions (Globalization’s Impact on Education, n.d.).

Reflecting on the role of leaders, Ellen-Earle Chaffee states that they need to safeguard independence and academic freedom by stopping attempts to control academic institutions for

political, ideological, and self-interested purposes. Otherwise, politics, opinion, beliefs, short-term thinking, and inexperience would take over from hard-won expertise, long-term vision, and thoughtful fiduciary leadership. Furthermore, the best safeguard for freedom of expression and freedom of inquiry in colleges and universities is a healthy democracy.

Leaders of all colleges and universities have important, mission-related roles to play in securing educational freedom, independent governance, and democracy. That leadership can help bridge and heal divides and is essential for mission-fulfillment in higher education. Democracy provides educational freedom; educational institutions must provide democracy with competent, engaged citizens.

In conclusion, the values that universities promote and embody are crucial for navigating the complex challenges of today’s world. Universities must reflect on and reinforce their core values in all aspects of their operation, ensuring they remain places of respect, openness, and critical thought. By doing so, they not only educate individuals but also contribute to the broader goal of creating a more informed, tolerant, and just society.

As Fanta Aw (International Educator, January 10, 2024) has stressed “...the antidote to war and polarization is increasing intercultural competence, demonstrating compassion, and combatting hate. Our work is more important than ever, for if done at scale and in sustained ways, it serves as a path to a more interconnected, peaceful world. The ability to know the “other” and understand with head and heart that the “other” is us and we are the “other” is vital to our existence and ability to thrive in an interdependent world.”

32 Navigating Trust Challenges in the Geopolitical Landscape at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences



by **Christine Øye**, Pro-rector for Research, **Elin Kvaale**, Head of International Relations, **Therese S. Skagen**, Head of Research