

Declaration on ethics and integrity in university teaching

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Presentation

This *Declaration on ethics and integrity in university teaching* is the second of three on integrity in academic activity presented by the University of Barcelona's Bioethics and Law Observatory. The purpose of these documents is to analyse the main ethical issues in the spheres of research, teaching and administration in higher education, and to make recommendations and proposals for future action.

The first declaration was written in collaboration with the Unesco Chair of the Catholic University of Porto and the Unesco Chair in Bioethics of the University of Barcelona (UB), whose headquarters is the UB's Bioethics and Law Observatory, and was entitled *Declaration on research integrity in responsible research and innovation*. In it we defined integrity, from an etymological and conceptual perspective linked to the idea of the 'intact whole' and addressing its moral dimension, 'as loyalty to an axiological and normative system adopted by the individual'. Thus, integrity is also understood as a principle that implies obligatory action and imposes respect for and protection of the dignity of every individual. This is the meaning captured in Unesco's Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. The Observatory's declaration, published in October 2016, provides guidelines for researchers, professionals and other agents in research and innovation systems, integrating the particularities of a Latin geographic sphere with its different cultural perspectives (it can be consulted at: www.publicacions.ub.edu/refs/observatoriBioEticaDret/documentos/08489.pdf).

In the present declaration we analyse the problems currently besetting teaching and learning in higher education in the current context of societies immersed in a process of economic, political and social conjunction, from which the university does not remain apart, as its operation is of vital impor-

tance to economic growth and social optimization. The paradigmatic changes that we are witnessing make it necessary to revise, consolidate and/or reform the tasks of the university professor, as university education responds to new educational circumstances that require new forms of learning, teaching and evaluation. The objectives of this document are the following: i) concretize what integrity in university teaching means, its fundamental content and implications; ii) influence decision-makers in higher education systems, guiding possible changes and normative approaches; iii) have an impact in the media and on public opinion to increase the quality of debate and encourage the free and informed decision-making of the citizenry in higher education policy.

This document was prepared by Drs. María Casado, Miquel Martínez –both of the UB– and Maria do Céu Patrão Neves –of the University of the Azores–. Drs. Francisco Esteban, Itziar de Lecuona, Manuel Lopez Baroni, Begoña Román and Albert Royes have also participated in its writing, as have the professionals and academics whose names are gathered at the end of the text.

This last of three declarations on integrity in academic activity will be dedicated to the ethical issues involved in the administration of higher education and university policies.

The initiative for these three documents comes from the Opinion Group of the Bioethics and Law Observatory; created in 2000, its main objective is to participate in informed social debate on issues that are of concern to society and on which no consensus exists. Through its proposals –which promote public policies and which have had an important normative impact– the Opinion Group hopes to contribute to the construction of a more just, transparent and democratic society (all documents are available at www.bioeticayderecho.ub.edu/en/documentos).

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State of the question

In recent decades, institutions of higher education have experienced deep changes, a reflection of the evolution of society. In this context we can highlight two fundamental dimensions in particular: the social (or socio-political) and the economic (or economic-financial).

From a social perspective, the democratization of education has increased the number of university students, diversified their profiles, accentuated pluralism, made educational trajectories more flexible, increased expectations, and increased the number of university professors and specializations. In addition, it has increased educational levels, making relations more complex and communication more difficult. At the same time, the teaching of academic knowledge has become separated from educating students for the purpose of obtaining employment. However, with the range of jobs rapidly transforming, higher education has had to continually reformulate its specialised offerings, increasingly ignoring the idea of the education of responsible citizenship and, instead, addressing immediate and changing functional necessities rather than permanent human necessities.

From an economic perspective, the economic crisis in a context of a growth in the number of institutions of higher education has led to a decrease in public financing, which has in turn led public universities to find other forms of financing, less dependent on the state. At the same time, the proliferation of private universities has increased competition between schools while financial deficits have generated the adoption of forms of organisation and management based on profit. Thus, the growing demand to adapt to the market has led to a growth in the supply of new courses and degrees and the capture of resources through the creation of specialized research centres and the search for economically profitable projects. In this context, humanistic education is atrophying while technical-scientific teachings are increasing; this also corresponds with the impoverishment of institutions of higher education.

Universities are increasingly perceived as businesses and, as such, are guided by profitability. This commodification of education entails a perception of students as customers. In addition, university teaching staff are ageing without adequate renovation, as positions that open up are increasingly being covered by professors contracted under precarious conditions and with attendant difficulties in advancing in their academic careers. As a result,

universities are losing their traditional social position as institutions training future leaders in diverse spheres, and instead they are becoming factories that produce workers with the aim of satisfying the most immediate needs of society.

At the same time, technological changes in specific areas are leading to an increasing concentration of university courses in a limited number of schools, which is further reinforced by the substantial resources they have available. The almost complete disappearance or irrelevance of smaller universities impacts on research, teaching, pluralism and multiculturalism. Under the appearance of being free, so-called MOOC courses or their equivalents are often employed as a strategy for capturing potential students for a university model that is concentrating students in fewer but well-financed universities, which also receive financing from the state, in detriment to others. This decline in diversity will generate a standardisation of knowledge, of forms imposed by economic and ideological criteria that are being spread through a discourse based on scientific and technical progress, which in practice will bring with it a retreat from a humanistic perspective.

In this context we are seeing an increase in competition between academics, university departments and schools, as well as between universities. This competition is increasingly hard-fought to the point of being almost cannibalistic, especially in terms of attracting students and financing projects. In addition, the tendency toward homogenizing programmes and curriculums under the excuse of a more efficient academic organisation is leaving less space for the necessary plurality in content and research. The criterion that has been imposed in recent years, in the context of the economic crisis, is that the student is a customer that has to be squeezed economically. The appearance of masters programmes, in substitution of the fourth and fifth years of prior degree programmes, has been accompanied by an increase in cost that has tripled the price of university for students, without it being clear that there has been a corresponding improvement in the quality of teaching and the education received. Tuition costs, so unequal across regions, and the fees for second and successive enrolments, the decline in scholarships, and the confusing list of degrees have only deepened social and regional differences and substituted the social function of the university for criteria based on profitability, productivity and competitiveness. It is difficult to speak of academic integrity in universities where more or less half of the university teaching staff earns below the inter-professional minimum wage. Precarious-

ness, temporary employment, contracting fraud, and so on, have consolidated a model in which survival and social Darwinism prevail. Without the conditions for decent work it is difficult to talk of ethics in higher education.

The aggressive conditions under which universities increasingly function favour the emergence of practices exclusively oriented toward success, followed by an obsession with quantification, reducing actions to numbers. Often it seems that a new logic has tacitly been instituted that only considers concrete or practical achievements, their social visibility and their financial value.

Ultimately, this model is perverse because it equates academic success with productivity and economic profit, distorting the social mission of the university and the teacher, and turning university education into one more economic activity, which as such must by definition be profitable in economic terms. The tyranny of the ranking of institutions of higher education and of their scientific production, and the unbridled search for rank at all cost, frequently generates transgressions of integrity.

Even recognizing the clear necessity of optimizing human and financial resources, as well as the convenience of evaluating the work of university professors –which necessitates the commitment of everyone involved in seeking innovative and successful ways to foster specialized education and citizen formation– the specificity of their mission must be taken into account in the criteria for evaluating teachers and academic institutions, which differ greatly from that of a typical business. The value of cooperation over competition must be re-established, the value of synergies and their multiplying effect over confrontation and its divisive impact, recognizing the social responsibility institutions of higher learning and their teachers have: forming not only professionals but citizens.

In this sense, institutions of higher learning should invest in values training for everyone in the academic community –professors, researchers, other employees and students, with special emphasis on the social responsibility of each and a focus on the figure of the professor as the centre of relations among students, colleagues, other members of the university community and society; as well as on fostering integrity in actions– understood as a commitment to an axiological and normative system that ensures completion of the university’s mission, commitment to social responsibility and to the dignity of those who are a part of it.

In a time of transition and frequent conflict over different conceptualizations of the task of the uni-

versity and its mission, it is essential to foster dialogue between society and the university to be able to face the challenges that this new scenario entails. This requires taking the social, political and economic context in which the university carries out its work into consideration, and responding to the question of what values guide its operating structures and what ends are pursued –or should be pursued– by it as an institution. In this context, this Declaration addresses the question of integrity in university teaching through three aspects:

What are the functions of higher education?

It is clear that the university is currently immersed in a contradictory process, as it must carry out tasks that are often in conflict: on the one hand, it is assigned the function of a centre for research and knowledge but, at the same time, it must act like a service firm that trains technicians to satisfy the needs of the market. Understanding that the university is increasingly conceived of as a business means adopting a conception of its mission and functions that is radically different than if it is considered to be an autonomous centre for research, teaching and scientific and cultural divulgation. This contradiction generates significant problems, not only with respect to the place of teaching and the values that should be transmitted, but also with respect to the function and meaning of other facets of academic activity, which can lead to conflicts of interest and be susceptible to possible manipulations.

Thus, today, a university professor is: a researcher, advancing in his/her academic career through the knowledge he/she produces; procures and manages finances, financing his/her own research and contributing to paying for his/her teaching; an administrator, organizing all aspects of academic life; a scholar, keeping up to date scientifically and pedagogically and investing in his/her training, and a cultural and scientific communicator, extending the university’s connection to society. These multiple functions not only generate conflicts of interest, but also distract academics from their most paradigmatic function: contributing to the overall development of the student.

What is the *ethos* of a university education?

To answer this question it is important to keep in mind that the *ethos* of a university education, the best practices and the ethical values that sustain it, cannot be separated from its *telos*, that is, its ultimate objective or aim.

Higher education is highly specialized and professional training, but it is not only or even mainly this. Higher education also has to do with the individual transcending him/herself in the process, with all that leads to human excellence. For this reason it is necessary to limit the excessive pragmatism that currently dominates the functioning of the university and recover the humanistic and personal dimension of a university education.

A university education consists in more than obtaining a university degree, and must aspire to something more than adapting to the professional, economic and social reality of the moment. Something is not working as it should when, year after year, so many students, whatever their studies may be, do not experience all a university education can be, but rather just 'pass through' it as if it were an obstacle course.

For this reason, a university education should be conceived of as an ethical event, as it is both training for a profession and of a person, and an ethical challenge, to the extent that the educational project corresponds to an axiological choice.

It is no exaggeration to think that the impact of higher education within a community will be determined by both the type of persons future professionals and citizens become, as well as by what they know and do not know how to do. For this reason, integrity in university teaching is a fundamental factor in the work of the university and, therefore, it is necessary to explain what we mean by it here and why we consider it essential in twenty-first century universities.

Who should universities answer to?

The university must take into account the tasks it has: research, teaching, divulgation and transfer of knowledge. Advanced knowledge is legitimate, in short, if it contributes to improving quality of life, social well-being and global sustainability, which in this case consists specifically in human development and progress. We believe that higher education as a whole must answer to society, socio-professional institutions and students.

To society, the university must provide high quality specialized knowledge, which means teaching this knowledge, transmitting it, adding to it and awakening interest in it. If, in addition, we are referring to public universities that are financed with public monies, they should also answer to government to guarantee that they meet their social responsibilities. And if they are private schools, they must answer to the families or students that pay tu-

ition, applying the relevant mechanisms of transparency and publicity.

To the organizations, businesses, associations, professional associations, etc., that trust in the professional and human training and competence of the citizens that the university educates, it must also guarantee that the degrees that it grants are effectively at the level necessary to resolve the problems that professionals educated by the university must face.

To students, the university must provide rigorous and up to date technical knowledge, and teach them to think critically and autonomously. In short, it must offer them a complete education, addressing both the norms of a pluralist and dialogic community, as is the university, as well as a manner of being human, which will depend on the use made of what is learned.

Lastly, the university must also answer to itself, ensuring that it completes its mission maintaining coherence with its values (institutional loyalty).

Integrity as an imperative in university teaching

Definition

Integrity as a concept has a conceptual specificity depending on the sphere in which it is employed. Currently, this concept tends to be used as a synonym for ethics, both within the sphere of scientific research, as well as in university teaching, as has been pointed out in the *Declaration on scientific integrity in responsible research and innovation* (2016). Integrity is an ethical value, but does not exhaust the extent of ethical action, except when it is considered as the minimum consensus possible in a particular sphere of action. However, it is essential to define the specificity of integrity in each concrete and particular sphere to which it is applied so that compliance can be evaluated. In the text of that initial declaration, integrity was identified etymologically as the quality of being incorrupt, encompassing the notions of honesty, in a commitment to truth, and independence, in the preservation of freedom and neutrality in professional practice in relation to particular interests. Both notions require the observance of values such as truth, rigour, objectivity, transparency and social responsibility, which constitute not only a way of defining the concept, but also of stating the norms of action that it implies and the criteria necessary for evaluating its observance.

Integrity is an imperative in university teaching, so that it is important to define its specific meaning in this case. In effect, although university teaching is grounded in research, its sphere of action is wider and more diverse, making it more complex from an ethical perspective. Therefore, it can be said that integrity in university teaching not only necessitates the same values as in scientific research –honesty, independence and impartiality– but other more specific attitudes and behaviours because, as mentioned, teaching is a relational activity in a heterogeneous context given the diverse roles of the teacher in the academic community.

Requisites

The relationships that frame university teaching are strongly hierarchical and marked by unequal power, which raises new and important ethical challenges. In this sense, the most characteristic and transversal traits of integrity in university teaching are expressed in: respect for the competencies and functions of each academic as well as each person that is part of the university community, within a spirit of collaboration and reciprocity; and the acceptance of power as a responsibility that must be exercised in favour of the academic community and in service to the broader society of which it is a part, in the sense of satisfying the expectations of students and the needs of society.

In addition to these generic and transversal requisites in the different areas of the teaching relationship, it is specifically on the particular terrain of these relations –with students, with colleagues and the academic community, with the institution and hierarchical superiors, with society– where the specific requisites of integrity can be best identified.

In short, integrity is an imperative in university teaching in all its dimensions: in the relationship with students respect is required for the dignity that pertains to them, recognizing the uniqueness of each student by adapting teaching to their respective specificities, and acting with objectivity and rigour, justice and responsibility in evaluating students; in the relationship with colleagues and other members of the academic community collaboration is required and the recognition of specific competencies, as well as a cordial relationship that does permit constructive criticism; in the relationship with the university as an institution, commitment and loyalty to its general mission and any particular orientations is required; lastly, in the relationship with society, social responsibility is required.

The dimensions of integrity in university teaching

Given the complexity of the concept of integrity in university teaching, it is necessary to consider the manner in which integrity can become a reality, that is, how examples of integrity can be communicated to students, and the ideal conditions that can be created so that it is effectively transmitted.

In what follows, we examine the spheres in which academic integrity is required, structured by the multiplicity of relationships with students. Among these stand out the importance of the treatment of scientific, humanistic and cultural content and the creation of settings for teaching, learning and evaluation; openness to participating with colleagues and other members of the university community, with the university as an institution, and with the society.

The relationship with students

The relationship which professors establish with students is a fundamental pillar of their professional responsibilities, and an ethical component strongly conditions that relationship.

From the professors to the students

Professors should not consider the student as only an individual attending university in pursuit of an academic degree or other type of certification, but rather as a unique person in a process of development. Clearly, granting academic degrees is an important task of the university, but it is not its only responsibility. Students attend university to acquire knowledge, skills and techniques. As a consequence, they are not merely consumers looking to acquire what they will need for their future social and professional life. Thus, the professor must create an environment that will permit the student to reflect and, as a consequence, critically analyse every situation, generating in this way the need for learning on the part of the student.

The student must be respected as someone that attends university to educate him/herself as an expert as well as an individual and a citizen. This consideration, which is what this document proposes, requires that the university professor act with integrity in relation to his/her students. This is a commitment of an ethical nature and, therefore, refers to a duty toward the person more than toward the student, and implies addressing issues that have to do with the values and feelings of that person. In practice, professors must be respectful of the differ-

ent personal appreciations of individual students, without this implying approval for all possible conceptions and opinions, particularly those that threaten social coexistence or the development of a full and healthy way of life.

The ethical commitment mentioned also assumes exemplary behaviour on the part of the university professor. It makes no sense that professors teach however they would like in the classroom. University students also observe their professors and in one way or another they demand that they behave in a coherent, sensitive manner in accord with what they represent. This concern has greater relevance today, particularly when professors no longer appear only in their classrooms or offices, but are also present on digital social networks.

From the students to the professors

The main objective of this document is a discussion of the integrity of university teachers; however –given that all true relations imply reciprocity– we want to briefly discuss the relationship of students to professors from the perspective of the former.

We suggest that the starting point of this relationship is the unavoidable ethical commitment that students must have, which manifests in: respect toward their peers and their teachers; commitment to the adequate use of the resources that society (especially in the case of public universities) puts within their reach to effectively contribute to their comprehensive education; respect for their own work and that of others in their rejection of plagiarism and cheating in exams; and the fostering of collaborative attitudes that counter a system based on competition. For these reasons, we believe that these criteria and values should be taught from the very beginning of university, with the aim that they are internalized and integrated as a part of students' overall education.

Dealing with academic content

Another dimension in which university professors must act with integrity is in the treatment of the academic content that forms part of their teaching curriculum. As is well-known, academic content can generate controversy and lean toward one perspective or another depending on the ethical orientation used to frame it. In addition, much curricular content can be presented as authentic moral dilemmas, so that the professor must address such content distinguishing facts, interpretations and arguments, and in so doing stimulate analytical and critical thought and emphasize that no position is ethically neutral.

The university professor must also demonstrate an ethical commitment to said content, and this implies various actions. On the one hand, appreciation is necessary for what is taught in the classroom. This is not only a good way to ensure that students are also infected with this appreciation, but it is also a good way to get students to understand the seriousness that everything that can be explained and learned in university has.

On the other hand, the treatment of academic content should be carried out carefully and with ethical finesse. University professors should assume that a single issue, idea or social situation can be considered from diverse perspectives and not only from that held by the professor. It should not be forgotten that the front of the classroom is not a pulpit or a podium to be used to defend a singular view of reality, as the university is a place of reasoned dialogue, for the presentation of different moral choices that all should be able to defend and debate. This does not mean converting the classroom into some type of showcase of unlimited social imaginaries; the university is also committed to the most rigorous ways of thinking. The integrity of the university professor in relation to academic content is also shown by supporting ways of thinking that are inclusive, that defend and support the ethical minimum of coexistence and respect.

In addition, it should be emphasized that academic freedom, which is essential to scientific integrity, is being attacked and in danger, despite its inspiration in democratic principles. On occasion, it is even used to question consolidated scientific knowledge. While criticism is clearly legitimate, and is what advances science, it makes no sense to discard what is already well-grounded, as has happened with human evolution, which is questioned from a religious perspective. Nor does the university's recent interest in alternative thought, which has invaded universities with courses for pseudo-therapies simply because they are a source of finance, make sense.

On this point, it is worth insisting that the university has the mission of transmitting scientific, cultural and humanistic content that explains the history of thought and of humanity, that is, that helps in our understanding of ourselves as individuals and as a community. In other words, the university is a place to address the great ideas of the past and the present, as well as to develop innovation at different levels of human activity and therefore impact on the future.

Integrity is also shown by recuperating and addressing that humanistic content, which is not a

specific part of any curriculum because it belongs to everyone, does not pertain to the exercise of any profession because it is incumbent on everyone, and does not belong to any specific faculty because it belongs to the university in its totality.

The settings for teaching, learning and evaluation

As is well-known, university professors must not only explain things, but they also and essentially must generate the conditions and environment for learning; they must organize the setting for teaching, learning and evaluation; in short, they must provide the best conditions possible for educating students.

Along with the traditional educational settings, such as classrooms, laboratories and seminars, that we find in universities, others are acquiring increasing importance: virtual settings, organizations and firms where internships are carried out, and places in specific localities where projects that combine academic learning with the provision of services take place. In all these places, the university student should feel, on the one hand, that he/she is treated with respect and given attention, that his/her particular way of learning is addressed, and, on the other hand, that the teaching staff is committed to using the best pedagogical methods available. To do this, teachers must accompany students in the learning process; this requires a more personal relationship between teacher and student and suggests the need to question the content and limits of this process from an ethical perspective. Accompanying the student should not mean a reduction in the rigour required to complete the objectives of study, nor behaviour that reduces the relationship to one of 'colleagues' or the perpetuation of a paternalistic culture, still so common in teaching. On the contrary, it is necessary to take into account that, if the final aim of higher education is to foster the overall development of the student so that he/she is able to become a person with greater capacity for discernment, it is necessary to respect and foster the development of the student's personal autonomy. The personalization of teaching processes, based on considering each student as the protagonist of his/ her learning process and mentoring as an important task, should also take into consideration, at least as far as the university is concerned, that students have to follow an academic path that is not always easy and smooth. In other words, the commitment of professors that we defend here is not only about adapting to the needs of the student, but also has to do with the demands of the level, quality and depth of university teaching. On this point, as with almost all that is analysed in this doc-

ument, teamwork among professors is necessary. But for this not to be based on only on the willingness or desire of university professors to do so, the institution must guarantee the working and academic conditions that will permit teamwork, and that a commitment to the best ways to teach, learn and evaluate are seen as a common cause.

Regarding evaluation, it should be stressed that it must be consistent with the learning methodology applied, whether in the classroom or in other educational environments and, in addition, it must be fair in a dual sense. On the one hand, the evaluation of what has been learned must be fair to the students, both in the sense that it is done in an objective manner and based on public and transparent criteria, and with respect to their particular learning processes; that is, that it considers the process in addition to the final results. On the other hand, evaluation must also be fair in regard to the university. In other words, it must not only respect the rights of students, but must also demand they meet their responsibilities. The professor becomes an example to follow when he/she carries out an evaluation based on quality and rigour in the most positive and educational senses of those terms.

The relationship with colleagues and other members of the university community

The ways in which university professors relate to their colleagues and other members of the university community is also related to what is being addressed in this document. These forms of coexistence should reflect that a department, faculty or university as a whole is, effectively, a community of persons and professionals that work in a climate of mutual respect and recognition.

Support for a university that is really an ethical community requires respect for the different ways of being and thinking that can exist within it. It is difficult to have integrity in places where submission to a concrete and determined way of working reigns, or where there is no freedom of thought. But something more is also necessary: appreciation for and valuing of other ways of thinking and doing, in other words, concern for others. The university professor, in the sense explained here, should consider academic life as an authentic opportunity for learning and personal growth. In other words, he/she must see the academy as a place of discussion, and even confrontation between perspectives, which values reasoned dialogue and argumentation as the best and only legitimate way of addressing differences. And the university as a community must

be equipped with procedures for dialogue that are also reasoned and reasonable.

It must also be mentioned that in relationships among colleagues and other members of the academic community, each and everyone of the individuals that form part of this community should carry out dignified work. We have inherited a tradition in which the teaching staff and administrative and service staff are members of the same community, but move within different spaces. Certainly, each of these groups carry out different tasks, but all must ultimately collaborate for the same ends. The integrity of an institution is also demonstrated when all the groups that coexist under a single project and collaborate on achieving the same objectives enjoy recognition as members of a community under equal conditions.

University students, which is the group that all the members of the university community are committed to, also perceive the nature of these relationships and forms of coexistence. They see their professors walking with personnel that work as secretaries; they appreciate the work carried out by the workers in charge of maintaining the classrooms and other facilities in good condition. In short, they understand if there is a common life in the university or not.

The relationship with the university as an institution

In speaking of integrity, the relationship that a university professor has with his/her own institution must be addressed, in particular, with the purposes that said institution has. The university professor is not a mere professional who goes to a place called the university to carry out a series of tasks; he/she is also someone that considers working at the university as something more than a mere occupation, even when his/her work there is not full-time. The university is not just any institution, and it requires a commitment to the ethical principles and values that it represents. Of course, this does not mean that all of these principles and values must be adopted without the option to discuss or modify them; rather, it implies involvement in them, specifically to criticize, improve or change them if it is considered necessary.

This is concretized in an authentic university experience: on the one hand, in being informed about what the university is and what it attempts to achieve; and, on the other hand, in being committed to its purposes, as well as its means for satisfying them. Achieving this involvement demands something more than maintaining certain institutional

rites, which are necessary but not sufficient. What is necessary, above all, is the establishment of mechanisms and settings through which the academic staff sees reasons for its connection, motives for committing to the institution and for actively participating in its improvement.

For the teaching staff to really be involved in their university, the model of university life that commonly exists in our universities must be changed. It would be useful to analyse other approaches to the organisation of the university in which the teaching staff is not only responsible for a subject area or a series of them, or acts as an occasional administrator in carrying out certain tasks, but also feels responsible for the scientific, cultural and artistic life of the university.

With respect to the degree of participation, university teaching staff should foster the involvement of students in the dynamics and processes that the university carries out. The student is much more than a mere observer of what happens in the university, or a guest that arrives to acquire learning or knowledge once everything is already organized and ready. The professor should get students involved in institutional life, both in aspects that have to do with the educational process, as well as those that have to do with the formation of the student as a person or with evaluation of the quality of the learning process.

The relationship with society

The university is inserted within a broader community with its specific social, economic and political reality. It makes no sense that this institution be considered as separate from that broader environment of which it is a part, nor that it be dedicated to tasks that have little to do with what takes place there. This is the image of the university as an ivory tower. Thus, one might consider that the task of the university professor is to achieve an adequate adaptation to that reality, that is, to observe and understand what happens there so that the university can contribute what is needed. The idea of integrity that is defended here is not so much about that adaptation as it is about the ethical orientation that this reality necessitates. The university professor, and the university as a whole, can and must be, in this sense, a reference, an observer of what is happening and an analyst that puts forward rational arguments with the aim of evaluating whether what occurs is the best possible outcome.

In this sense, the university professor who acts with integrity must display his/her honesty in a commitment to knowledge, must act with independence

with respect to possible pressures from both within and outside of the university, and must show him/herself to be a professional who evaluates controversial situations with reasoned and rational arguments.

Regarding the latter point, the university professor –as both a citizen and scholar of an area of knowledge– should participate in public debate over the values that are today incumbent on all of us and that affect respect for human rights, human dignity and sustainability. He/she must also denounce the lack of such rights, violence of any type, whether directed at other persons, institutions or the environment, and any form of discrimination or limitation on freedoms.

Taking into consideration the current social and economic challenges faced by higher education and the multiple roles that the university professor currently must carry out, it is necessary to specify what is required to act with integrity in all the different dimensions of his/her work, to promote the mission of higher education and the dignity of all those involved.

Recommendations

It is necessary to strengthen support for academic freedom, not only in society and the university, but also among university professors.

To do this, the educational community should:

- Foster teaching based on a pluralist approach and not indoctrination.
- Develop the necessary skills for gathering, analysing and understanding information from diverse sources.
- Cultivate a critical spirit in students.
- Recognize the importance of rigour and objectivity in creating knowledge, with the aim of avoiding an extreme relativism that negates scientifically accepted knowledge.

It is necessary to evaluate the financial mechanisms that universities must use to subsist and the increasing dependence of public universities on the private sector. To do this, the educational community should:

- Pay particular attention to sponsorship or patronage agreements of universities and scrupulously limit them to institutions that are respectful of the ethical principles that must characterize the university.
- Evaluate the moral and ethical compatibility of professional tasks undertaken by the teaching staff outside of the university.

- Recognize the impact of precarious employment among university professors on the quality of teaching.
- Guarantee respect for the condition of the student when he/she participates in internships in businesses and institutions and when providing services associated with the fulfillment of scholarship requirements.

It is necessary to foster among students a culture of effort, scientific rigour, intellectual curiosity, participation in academic life and society, and respect for oneself and others. To do this, the educational community should:

- Revitalize university life in the most original and open sense of the term, recognizing the student as a unique person, as a citizen and future professional.
- Involve the student in the learning process.

It is necessary to establish and regulate adequate procedures for identifying and countering poor educational practice.

To do this, the educational community should:

- Take effective measures against a culture of plagiarism, both among teachers as well as students.
- Attempt to eliminate taking unfair advantage of scholarship recipients, collaborators and university personnel without employment stability, whose futures often depend on those who take advantage of their efforts.
- Adopt mechanisms to stop the increasingly sophisticated techniques used in copying in exams.

It is necessary to foster a culture of accountability and the evaluation of teaching and research activity.

To do this, the educational community should:

- Promote open access, in order to prevent research papers of commercial interest from being financed with public money or that university professors become clients of publishers.
- Foster actions that emphasize the epistemological and psycho-pedagogical education of teaching staff, collaborative work between professors, and the tasks of academic and personal advising.
- Avoid the creation of a parallel industry that extracts its profits from the needs of teaching staff for accreditation and the urgency of universities to climb in the rankings.
- Create rankings that avoid implicit cultural biases, as often happens with international measurement instruments.
- Establish evaluation criteria that are public, transparent and objective.