

Some Questions and Answers about Lasallian Higher Education

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How Does Lasallian Higher Education Fit within the Lasallian Tradition?

It is at the core of the Lasallian tradition to be attentive to educational needs and to meet them, preceded by discernment in community. This attention to emerging educational needs is at the origin of both old and new Lasallian higher education institutions.

At one time, Lasallian institutions of higher education were considered exceptional to the mainstream activities of the Brothers, who were, initially and for the most part, involved in primary and secondary education. Until quite recently, there has been a persistent questioning of the legitimacy of higher education within the Lasallian educational mission. However, it would be erroneous to think that the Founder and the first Brothers never involved themselves in higher education. Our Lasallian history shows quite the contrary.

In one of his addresses to the assembly of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU)³ presidents, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, our former Superior General, stated:

In a certain way, we can say that higher education in the Institute was born with the Founder and his concern for the formation of teachers.⁴

Examples of the Founder's concern in this regard for the "seminaries" for preparing rural schoolmasters and the extraordinary and creative school of Saint Yon. In the latter, the curriculum was already different from that of the primary schools because its purpose was "to meet the requests of businesses in the city that wanted their children to have a preparation related to their profession" and "to give the sons of the business people a preparation aligned with their profession."⁵

Before the French Revolution, the Brothers had developed specialized options and pedagogical programs beyond the primary level. Some educational institutions of the eighteenth century (called Pensionnats) set the guidelines for practical, technical knowledge, directly applicable to employment. They were something similar to what we call today technical schools or polytechnic universities.

In the nineteenth century, secondary education, evening adult classes for workers, and trade and technical schools began to evolve into the institutional forerunners of our contemporary Lasallian higher education institutions. For instance, early in the 1850s, Manhattan College in New York (USA) and the Agricultural Institute of Beauvais (France) opened within months of each other.

The former was charged with the preparation of teachers and seminarians, but soon included not only “classical education,” but also polytechnic preparation. The latter became the modern expression of a tradition of French Lasallian technical and professional training.

In the following decades, Lasallian tertiary education was well established through other institutions like the Saint Luc Art Schools in Brussels (Belgium) and La Salle University of Philadelphia and Saint Mary’s College of California, among others, in the United States of America.

Through the first decades of the twentieth century, prominent Lasallian colleges, universities and technical institutes continued to be established in France (ESAIP, ECAM, etc.), Spain (La Salle Engineering in Barcelona) and the USA (Saint Mary’s University in Winona, Christian Brothers University in Memphis, and Lewis University in Romeoville).

Lasallian higher education was established in the Asia Pacific with the founding of De La Salle in Manila (Philippines) in 1911.

In 1957, a Spanish Brother Pablo Mandazan Soto, FSC, (aka Ginés) initiated in Venezuela the La Salle Foundation for Natural Sciences, dedicated to research and education for the sustainable development of the poorest regions of Venezuela. During the same decade, the first Latin American Lasallian university was opened in Havana; but it was closed at the time of the Cuban revolution before its first class graduated. Universidad La Salle of Mexico City, De La Salle University in Bogotá (Colombia), and De La Salle University Bajío in Leon (Mexico), were founded shortly after, in the early 1960s.

Bethlehem University came into being as a place of higher learning in 1973, following the historic visit of Pope Paul VI to the Holy Land in 1964. The establishment of Bethlehem University originated with the desire of the Pope to do something to help the Palestinian people. Informed of the Brothers’ educational tradition in the Holy Land, he requested that the Institute take responsibility for the University. Since its establishment, a De La Salle Brother has occupied the position of vice-chancellor.

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the boom of new Lasallian universities in Latin America and the Philippines. This time was also the beginning of higher education in Africa. The African Lasallian Center of Abidjan (Ivory Coast) began in 1991. Christ the Teacher Institute for Education of Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota, which functions in conjunction with Tangaza College in Nairobi (Kenya), was formally accredited in 1996.

In just over a century, the Lasallian educational mission was decidedly positioned in higher education, with notable institutions in most regions of the world.

Demographics and demand for specialized and tertiary education were pressuring long-established Lasallian institutions to create branch campuses to serve the demand for Lasallian higher education. In addition, in many areas of the world, especially in developing countries, teacher education was gradually being officially incorporated into higher education, which began

to close the real, or perceived, distance between Lasallian higher education and traditional Lasallian educational ministries.

It is fortunate that the extraordinary Brothers who, encouraged and supported by parent associations of primary and secondary Lasallian schools, entrepreneurs, and Church authorities and overcoming resistance and open opposition had the courage to initiate one of the best chapters of Lasallian history.⁶

Where Are Lasallian Colleges and Universities Located?

What follows is a list of IALU universities by geographical location and IALU region.⁷

Region	Universities	City	Country
Asia and Pacific Islands (11)	De La Salle Araneta University	Araneta	Philippines
	De La Salle Health Sciences Institute	Dasmaringas	Philippines
	De La Salle John Bosco College	Surigao del Sur	Philippines
	De La Salle Lipa	Lipa	Philippines
	De La Salle University Manila	Manila	Philippines
	De La Salle University Dasmaringas	Dasmaringas	Philippines
	De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde	Manila	Philippines
	La Salle College Antipolo	Antipolo	Philippines
	La Salle College of the Arts	Singapore	Singapore
	La Salle University Ozamiz	Ozamiz	Philippines
	University of Saint La Salle Bacolod	Bacolod	Philippines
Europe and French-Speaking Africa (10)	Centre Lasallien Africain	Abidjan	Ivory Coast
	ECAM	Lyon	France
	ECAM Rennes - Louis de Broglie	Bruz	France
	École Supérieure Technique La Salle	Douala	Cameroon
	ESAIP	Angers	France
	Unilasalle France	Beauvais	France
	ISFEC La Salle-Mounier	Paris	France
	La Salle - Universitat Ramon Llull	Barcelona	Spain
	La Salle Campus Madrid	Madrid	Spain
	La Salle Open University	Andorra	Andorra
Mexico (15)	Centro de Estudios Superiores La Salle	Monterrey	Mexico
	Universidad De La Salle Bajío	Bajío - Leon	Mexico
	Universidad de La Salle Noroeste	Ciudad Obregon	Mexico
	Universidad de La Salle Pachuca	Pachuca	Mexico

	Universidad La Salle Benavente	Benavente	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Cancún	Cancún	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Chihuahua	Chihuahua	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca	Cuernavaca	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Laguna	Laguna	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Mexico DF	Mexico City	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Morelia	Morelia	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Nezahualcóyotl	Mexico	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Oaxaca	Oaxaca	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Saltillo	Saltillo	Mexico
	Universidad La Salle Victoria	Victoria	Mexico
North America, Bethlehem and English- speaking Africa (8)	Bethlehem University	Bethlehem	Palestine
	Christian Brothers University	Memphis	USA
	Ethiopian Catholic University - La Salle	Addis Ababa	Ethiopia
	La Salle University Philadelphia	Philadelphia	USA
	Lewis University	Romeoville	USA
	Manhattan College	New York	USA
	Saint Mary's College of California	Moraga	USA
	Saint Mary's University of Minnesota	Winona/ Minneapolis	USA
Central and South America (19)	Universidad De La Salle	La Paz	Bolivia
	Universidade La Salle	Canoas	Brazil
	Faculdade La Salle	Lucas do Rio Verde	Brazil
	Faculdade La Salle	Manaus	Brazil
	Centro Universitário La Salle	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil
	Universidade Católica de Brasília	Brasilia	Brazil
	Centro Universitário do Leste de Minas	Coronel Fabriciano	Brazil
	Faculdade Imaculada Conceição	Recife	Brazil
	Faculdade Católica do Tocantins	Palmas	Brazil
	Faculdade La Salle	Estrela	Brazil
	Universidad de La Salle	Bogota	Colombia
	Corporación Universitaria Lasallista	Medellin	Colombia
	Escuela Tecnológica Instituto Técnico Central	Bogota	Colombia
	Universidad De La Salle Costa Rica	San Jose	Costa Rica
	Universidad La Salle Arequipa	Arequipa	Perú
	Instituto Superior Pedagogico La Salle	Urubamba	Perú

	Universidad Tecnológica La Salle	Nicaragua	Nicaragua
	Fundacion La Salle	Caracas	Venezuela
	Fundacion La Salle	Buenos Aires	Argentina

What Types of Lasallian Universities Are There?

Until recently, there has not been the desire to classify the institutions that are IALU members. Lately however, IALU’s Executive Director⁸ made the first attempt at a classification according to different criteria.⁹ From the conclusions drawn from this research, the following can be stated.

From the point of view of their geographical location, IALU member institutions are located in five regions:

- Asia and Pacific Islands;
- Central and South America;
- Europe and French-Speaking Africa;
- Mexico; and
- North America, Bethlehem and English-Speaking Africa.

Dr. Cohelo suggests that rather than grouping them based on the language of instruction “a division by continents would surely be more effective.”

Considering the institution’s name as an expression of its Catholic identity, this research finds out that the larger majority (50 out of 65) of the IALU members carry La Salle in their names. Only five of them have a name that does not suggest a Catholic identity.

When looking at the economy of country of origin and based on the World Bank criteria (gross national income per capita), the study concludes that only one Lasallian university is present in a low income country, five are present in lower middle income countries, seven are located in upper middle income economies, and five are present in high income countries.

According to their years of service, IALU institutions are rather young. The data gathered shows that a little more than half of them are forty years old or even younger. This fact represents the rising importance given to universities by the Institute and also explains the continuing growth of these institutions.

According to their enrollment and based on the Carnegie Classification¹⁰ for institutions of higher education, more than half of Lasallian universities are very small or small. This is not unexpected knowing that the La Salle higher education network is fairly young.

The last classification intended by the aforementioned research is according to degree offerings. First, the assumption was made that all IALU institutions offer four-year programs. Next, this study identified which Lasallian universities are allowed to offer master or doctoral degrees in their countries. Then the study established that “almost a third of Lasallian universities do not offer either master or doctoral degree programs and just one in four offer doctoral degrees.”

The authors of this study recognized that their effort at classifying institutions is still “preliminary.” They also went on to suggest other aspects for categorizing universities, For example: faculty and staff size, average tuition, financial aide available, and so on.

How Do Lasallian Educational Principles Relate to Young Adults and Graduate-Student Adults?

Our foundation as the Lasallian educational network is based on the thought and spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Our mission is energized by his educational vision. Inspired by this vision, we promote quality education inspired by the Founder’s pedagogical thought.

Since the beginning of the Institute, our Founder and the first Brothers adopted a series of pedagogical principles. After a few years of testing them through their own daily practice in the schools, these principles were put together in *The Conduct of Schools*,¹¹ a book authored by the entire teaching community. These principles have been passed down from one generation of Lasallians to the next. Today, these principles are true tenets of the Lasallian educational tradition.

Even though the Lasallian pedagogical style stemmed from and further developed out of the elementary school classroom, educators of all teaching levels can successfully practice them.

Among those principles, I have selected a few which are relevant to the education of young adults and graduate school students.

Wholistic (integral) education: Regardless of the age of the learner, a good quality education has to promote a well-rounded growth.

Personalized (individualized) instruction: The Lasallian educator makes it a priority to get to know each one of his or her students as much as possible.

Fraternal relationship between teacher and learner: In the Lasallian school, the teacher-pupil relationship involves care and warmth.

Learner assumes responsibility for his/her education: In the Lasallian classroom, it is the learner and not the teacher who is at center stage. By assuming responsibilities, learners develop into real leaders.

Practical learning: Content has to be relevant, that is, it has to relate to real-life experiences. This is perhaps one of the educational principles that guides the design of any program aimed at an adult population. Adults are practice-driven learners.

The importance of the pedagogical principles mentioned above was confirmed by a highly relevant theory about adult learning that was first presented by Malcolm Knowles in 1968.¹²

According to this theory, adult learners:

- have a great need to know why certain content is taught to them;
- want to participate and control their learning;
- have a great reserve (large pool) of experience with which they can relate new learning;
- want to set their own learning pace;
- have a great need for feedback about their learning;
- are oriented toward specific tasks;
- bring more diversity to the learning situation;
- prefer varied instructional methods;
- like active rather than passive learning experiences; and
- like to determine the place and time for learning.

The striking similarity of the tenets of Knowles' theory with the Lasallian principles clearly manifests the genius and the vision of the first Lasallian teaching community.

In today's Lasallian institutions of higher learning, these principles are greatly appreciated and lived out by instructors.

What Are Some of the Most Innovative New Works in Lasallian Higher Education?

The long-standing Lasallian tradition of looking for new needs in order to meet them continually encourages creativity that, in turn, nurtures and encourages innovation. Like many other educational institutions around the world, especially of the tertiary level, IALU universities face the challenge of innovating to update not only their methods, but also the content in order to help students develop the kind of skills that will be needed to navigate successfully in the twenty-first century.

A quick look at initiatives undertaken in IALU institutions allows us to identify some areas that concentrate innovation efforts. These are technology, alliances, and entrepreneurship promotion.

Technology

Examples of *technological innovation* are (1) the increasing use of technology for teaching and learning through platforms available to the general public and others that are customized and (2) the fast development of on-line programs.

Alliances

Alliances with other universities as well as with enterprises, companies, firms, businesses, corporations, organizations, and consortiums are signed continuously. As a result, different types of partnership emerge. These partnerships make it possible and encourage, among other things, internships abroad and research.

Entrepreneurship Promotion

Administrators of tertiary education programs are constantly reminded of their responsibility of educating people capable of creating opportunities instead of asking for them. To meet this challenge, there exist all kinds of programs to encourage *entrepreneurship* and business incubators. It is true that the success of these initiatives varies and that there is still room for learning from experience in this regard.

But, there are two other areas – not commonly mentioned by the way – where the innovation efforts are remarkable, outstanding. I refer to (1) *financial affordability* that, in turn, contributes to financial sustainability and (2) Integration of reason and faith, science and religion. These characteristic features make the Lasallian project stand out compared to others.

Financial Affordability

At the Lasallian beginnings, gratuity was a core value for the educational mission. The evolution of society and the diversity of political and socio-economic contexts made it impossible to keep gratuity as it was; so later the goal became the issue of the *affordability* of the Lasallian educational services for all and, in particular, for low-income families. At the tertiary level, this is achieved in several ways today (scholarships, loans, discount rates, part-time jobs, fundraising, community service, and so on).

Each semester, more than a few Lasallian universities invest twenty to twenty-five percent of their budgets to make education affordable to their poorer students. There are institutions where more than fifty percent of the student body enjoys some discount. In fact, the percentage of students who pay full tuition is small indeed.

This reduction of net income certainly has a significant impact on school finances. This fact poses a significant challenge to those responsible for the health of the institution's finances. So far a combination of fiscal responsibility and outstanding creativity has been a miraculous formula. However, sustained efforts, especially through fundraising and billed services to external entities, will be necessary, from now on, to meet the economic demands of high quality education and to assure faithfulness to the Catholic and Lasallian identity of our network of colleges and universities around the world.

Integration of Reason and Faith

In an increasingly secularized society, *integration of reason and faith*, science and religion, at university campuses is thought by many as unthinkable, undoable, and virtually impossible. They simply do not see how these two dimensions of people's lives can be put together. But I can say that we achieve it.

Certainly, our fundamental commitment is the quest for truth through research, dissemination and transmission of knowledge and its application to transform social reality and to build a more just society.

While always promoting the search for truth and solutions to human problems and questions, we remain faithful to our Christian inspiration and our commitment to share the message of the Gospel while, at the same time, respecting other religious beliefs.

Intellectual development and faith development should not be understood by students as two distinct dimensions. On the contrary, these are to be seen as two dimensions that complement and nourish one another.

We work hard to help students see the close connection between different kinds of knowledge – including scientific, human, and faith knowledge. So that when they leave our institutions, they are determined to bear witness to their faith before the world and to respond to the demands of this critical and strong faith.

We attach particular importance to pastoral ministry. Ours is a ministry that combines the celebration of the faith of a believing community with the intellectual research of a community of study.

What Kinds of Collaboration Do You Know About?

Collaboration is an unwritten but very honored principle between Lasallian tertiary institutions. Among the diversity of forms of collaboration stand out the following.

The International Cuernavaca Conferences

Aside from the *Encuentros*,¹³ one collaborative initiative has been the creation of a yearly gathering of participants of a particular field in the city of Cuernavaca, Mexico. Because of the name of the city, these gatherings came to be known as Cuernavaca Conferences and were of great importance in advancing the Lasallian network, as they allowed for key players to spend time together in a retreat-like environment to discuss relevant themes.

Some of the groupings of participants at these gatherings were academic vice presidents, deans of schools of business, campus ministry officials, international programs directors and study abroad coordinators, deans of schools of education, and others.

The first conference took place in the year 2000 and the last one in 2008. A chart providing an outline of the history of IALU Cuernavaca Conferences follows.¹⁴

Conference	Year	Participants
Cuernavaca I	2000	Academic Vice Presidents
Cuernavaca II	2001	Faculty Development Directors responsible for Lasallian Formation
Cuernavaca III	2002	Business Deans and Directors
Cuernavaca IV	2003	Campus Ministry Officials
Cuernavaca V	2004	Academic Vice Presidents
Cuernavaca VI	2005	International Programs Directors and Study Abroad Coordinators

Cuernavaca VII	2006	Deans of Schools of Education
Cuernavaca VIII	2007	Technology Directors
Cuernavaca IX	2008	Research and the Lasallian Mission

The International Lasallian University Rome Faculty Leadership Program

This program was launched the year of 2007 at the *Encuentro* which took place in Porto Alegre, and it is of singular importance to the development and strengthening of Lasallian identity in tertiary education.

The program is targeted for university faculty and administration and is specifically designed to assist universities in their ongoing programs of faculty formation and enrichment.

To this day, more than 500 faculty and administrative-staff members from all regions of the network have attended this annual two-week program that takes place at the Institute's headquarters in Rome. Participants in this program return to their home institutions to be resource persons, mentors, and animators of the Lasallian mission.

The La Salle Student Summer Program on Leadership and Global Understanding

In similar fashion, a leadership program aimed at Lasallian university student leaders was launched in 2012, also to great success. Alternating sessions between a region of IALU and La Salle Headquarters in Rome, the program has had approximately 250 participants in its six editions to date.

Its goals are three-fold: firstly, to enhance the global perspective of our students, in order to develop better understanding and perception of a global society; secondly, to tackle issues of social justice, which are fundamental to the Lasallian network; and finally, to further develop Lasallian identity amongst students.

The One La Salle Agreement

Most recently and after two years of negotiation, many IALU member-institutions have signed the *One La Salle* Agreement in 2017.

One La Salle is an initiative that makes it possible for Lasallian identity to meet internationalization in the form of a multilateral exchange agreement for undergraduate students.

While respecting the autonomy of each institution to choose its students and exercise its particular criteria for selection, the initiative will allow undergraduate students from any Lasallian institution within the IALUY network to apply and study at another Lasallian institution of the IALU network on a tuition-waiver basis.

It is relevant to note that the annual gathering of Lasallian internationalization officers of IALU-member institutions that has taken place since 2015 in parallel to NAFSA¹⁵ has been instrumental to advancing this initiative. In many ways, this is both a return and consequence of

the success of the Cuernavaca Conferences, as allowing for the creation of narrower networks based on a topic that has been identified as having the potential to be an incredibly successful strategy.

The Annual International Symposium on Lasallian Research

There are several other events and actions within the Lasallian network which IALU either endorses or only communicates regarding its existence. Of these, one is the annual International Symposium on Lasallian Research that takes place every September in Minneapolis, home of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. Sponsored by Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and RELAN,¹⁶ the symposium is now in its seventh edition.

While gathering more than 100 participants every year, the event serves as a catalyst for cooperation in research, attending to those themes identified in 2016 by IALU's research agenda¹⁷ as key. These are: (1) food, nutrition, and health; (2) sustainability and the environment; and (3) education and learning innovations.

Additional Collaborations

Sometimes cooperation takes place on a bilateral or even mini-lateral basis and while it would be an exaggeration to suggest that IALU directly engages in such activity, it would not be a stretch to mention that these are a result of people interacting and establishing lines of communication at different IALU managed or endorsed events.

Examples of such activity – among several dozen – are: the bilateral cooperation between CESLAS Monterey (Mexico) and Manhattan College (USA) so that the former could support the latter in its Mission Month; the opening of an International Office at Universidad La Salle in Costa Rica with the support of its Latin American counterparts; and the creation of an oil engineering program in La Salle Rio de Janeiro with the support of Unilasalle France, where a successful geology program is run.¹⁸

Why Is the International Institute Recognizing Higher Education?

In recent years, there has been an important and significant shift with regard to the way in which the Institute sees higher education and its role in the Lasallian mission.

Beginning in 1993, the General Chapters of the Brothers of the Christian Schools¹⁹ have affirmed the significant role higher education has to play for the Institute, Society, and the Church; and the last three Superiors General²⁰ have steadily and strongly acknowledged the important role that Lasallian higher education plays in support of the shared mission.

Specifically, the 45th General Chapter, held in 2014, recognized the work done in higher education as an important contribution to the mission in the following terms.²¹

First, universities are places that allow for research to contribute to scientific thinking; and they provide the tools to improve the quality of life of men and women today,

particularly the poor. That is why the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU), in its 2013-2018 work plan, has called for research in the areas of nutrition and health, the environment, and innovations in education and learning aimed at serving the poor.

Second, universities are places where opportunities for dialogue between culture and faith can be encouraged and explored in all its depth and richness. This is an important aspect of evangelization as has been pointed out on repeated occasions by Pope Benedict XVI.

Third, universities are places where further research in pedagogy can be conducted to ensure the promotion of education in general and the Lasallian mission in particular....

Fourth, universities are places where professional training of Brothers and Lasallian Partners can be undertaken to ensure the development of the Institute, Society, and Church it serves.

Finally, the most recent General Chapter in 2014 encouraged Lasallian institutions of higher education to continue their contributions to teaching and learning, research, and societal development.

Without doubt, this acknowledgement is based on the realization of an important fact. Currently, one fifth of the people served by the Lasallian mission attend Lasallian institutions of higher education. And this number is growing because the number of IALU-member institutions is also increasing, especially in Africa.

What Role and Responsibilities Do Higher Education Institutions Have for the Lasallian World?

In keeping with the idea of brotherhood brought forth by its Founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the Lasallian network of higher education institutions has developed well in the last twenty years. Its purpose – to serve the Lasallian mission in higher education – is shared with the many other educational centers that were born of the same charism.

Collaboration between IALU and the Institute

Lasallian higher education has been insistently called upon to play a role as a vital connection throughout the entire international Lasallian Family. Therefore, defining the collaboration mechanisms between Lasallian higher education and the Institute will be a fundamental task. If mobilized in a creative and dynamic way, this relationship will deliver its full potential.

The Institute's expectations related to Lasallian higher education focus on three specific needs: (1) research, pedagogical and other; (2) formation of human resources, especially teaching and leadership cadres; and (3) support with establishing new universities in developing countries, namely on the African continent.

It is important to note that the Institute's first call to action that was directed specifically toward Lasallian institutions of higher education was made by the 42nd General Chapter in 1993. Being attentive to the signs of the times, the Brothers present at the General Chapter looked to a force within the Institute, which had begun to consolidate a unified presence, the Lasallian institutions of higher education.

- Solutions to the causes of poverty and social injustice need researchers.
- Preservation of the environment requires specialists.
- Collaboration with international organizations needs intermediaries.

The time had come when the universities had to accept these Lasallian challenges, not only on a local level, but also as a unified international force.

The 43rd General Chapter of 2000 made clear and precise recommendations to the universities and tertiary-level institutions that are vital to the future of the Institute. Research on the conditions of education around the world, support for the rights of children, and the proclamation of the Gospel and the promotion of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue were just some of these recommendations. It was clear that the talents and capacities of Lasallian higher education had raised great expectations.

A few years later, Superior General Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, opened his address to *Encuentro VII* in Barcelona with these words:

My presence among you is intended to be a sign of the importance our Institute gives today to higher education and an act of faith in its enormous possibilities. In the history of the Institute, the growth of Lasallian universities in almost all the regions of the world is without precedent and is a sign of the times, which we cannot ignore.²²

At *Encuentro VIII* in Canoas, Brother Álvaro went further and referred to the universities as

a miracle in our common history, an unprecedented event in our more than 300 years of service in Society and the Church . . . University development allows us to weave a more integral fabric from our works, where all, from the youngest to the oldest, find place, guidance, opportunity for development, and a human and Christian sense for their lives.²³

Together with this recognition came the Superior General's call for Lasallian higher education to continue its role in the whole associative movement for mission and in the implications of the urgent needs and challenges of the world today. He said:

These four aspects – hunger, migration, the disintegration of the family and the new forms of poverty – are they not calls of the Spirit asking of us a prophetic response at this moment in our history?²⁴

Brother Álvaro suggested that universities ask themselves how they could impact Lasallian projects, works and ministries worldwide and how they could be a real and significant presence in District, Regional and international structures, and even in the new virtual networks.

Finally, the 45th General Chapter of 2014 encouraged Lasallian higher education institutions to continue their contributions to teaching and learning, research, and societal development.

At this point, the relationship with La Salle Headquarters in Rome has never been as institutionalized. A change in IALU's statutes, that took place in Bogota at Encuentro XI in 2015, formalized what had been the practice until then, assigning a permanent seat on the IALU Board to a representative from the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Likewise, when it came to putting together the International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL), the Institute recognized the importance of higher education and of IALU by setting forth that

the Executive International Board of IALU will be invited to propose one member for the Council.²⁵

Most recently, IALU was asked by La Salle's Superior General to create a team that would assess the possibility of taking responsibility for a university in Ethiopia. The association responded in kind and sponsored such a team and after eighteen months of negotiation and visits which were coordinated between the Institute and IALU, the Institute gained a new center of education and IALU was happy to announce its 63rd member – Ethiopian Catholic University-La Salle – in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

What Is the Significance of the Role of the General Councilor for Higher Education?

Another important fact that reflects the significant shift referred to above was a transcendent decision made at the 45th General Chapter of 2014. First, the delegates stated that

in many parts of the Institute there are questions that must be answered in fraternal dialogue between Sectors, Districts and their own higher educational institutions.²⁶

Among others, the following were identified:

- how to bring about greater mission effectiveness in coordination with the Districts and Lasallian universities, in terms of Lasallian charism and stewardship of financial, material and human resources in aid of the Lasallian mission?
- what type of institutional relations should exist between IALU and the Center of the Institute?
- how to promote and strengthen the effectiveness of IALU?
- how to collaborate and strengthen the existing relationships between the Lasallian universities in developed countries and academic centers in emerging countries where the Lasallian mission exists?

- how to develop mutually beneficial projects between institutions of higher education and their Districts?²⁷

In order to respond to these challenges and opportunities, there is a need to promote conversations between institutions of higher education and the Center of the Institute. To do this, the 45th General Chapter of 2014 asked in its proposition #18:

that Brother Superior will appoint a General Councilor to accompany Lasallian higher education and recommend his appointment to the administrative council of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU).²⁸

Brother Superior has been very effective; he has accomplished both tasks. The author of this article was appointed to the General Council in December of 2014. Later, in March of 2015, the assembly of university presidents gathered in Bogota, Colombia, for *Encuentro XI* approved the author's appointment to the IALU international board of directors. The presence of the General Councilor on the IALU board bears witness to the fact that this General Chapter proposition has been fulfilled.

The role, therefore, of the General Councilor for accompanying Lasallian higher education is that of serving as a link between IALU and the Institute to promote dialogue and service to the Lasallian mission. Much progress has been made on both fronts. Currently, IALU and the Center of the Institute collaborate on several projects. Two examples are those (1) of assuming responsibility for the Catholic University of Ethiopia and (2) of working on a digital repository to assist Lasallian researchers.

What Are Some Expectations for Lasallian Higher Education as It Moves into the Future?

As IALU approaches twenty years of its creation, some new roles for the association have been developed so as to reflect its maturity as a network.

The last few years have also seen increasing work in each of the IALU regions, which in turn has helped to solidify the work of the network. In every IALU region, university presidents meet at least once a year. In several, there is more than one meeting per year; and other senior officers of institutions are involved as well, creating regional networks of experts in a particular field. This bodes well for the future of IALU, as it creates systematic buy-in from institutions on a regional level which in turn will feed much of the decisions that shall be taken at the multilateral level.

There might have been a time when there was doubt as to what the future would hold for a Lasallian network of higher education institutions. If that ever happened, the reality today leaves not much room for ambiguity.

At the end of the 2015 *Encuentro* of Lasallian university presidents in Bogotá, Colombia, there was among them a strong consensus on several paths to take Lasallian higher education into the future.²⁹

Lasallian higher education has a lot of potential. Its global reach, its common values, as well as its local impact and credibility or its large student, teacher and staff communities can be very powerful driving forces to growth and prosperity, if they are managed consistently.

However, for Lasallian higher education to deliver tangible results, the engagement of all higher education Lasallian institutions is fundamental. This means that Lasallian higher education will simply not deliver the desired results as long as Lasallian colleges and universities do not get involved directly, whatever the goodwill and efforts of IALU's permanent structure and international board of directors may be.

The historical processes that resulted in the creation of IALU and its subsequent development have self-reinforced its functioning and made it extremely unlikely that the chosen path will be reversed.³⁰

Final Comments

Responding to the needs of the times will always be the distinguishing characteristic of Lasallians everywhere. Their commitment to meet new needs will also be a life-giving act of fidelity to our Founder and, therefore, a promise of viability and vitality for the Lasallian mission.

So, as we look into the future of Lasallian higher education, we can see each Lasallian university converted into

a laboratory of peace, harmony, pursuit, acceptance, respect, compassion, solidarity, and wisdom. Only then will we turn into a reality what the Second Vatican Council gave us as a top-priority task: the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men [and women] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted. These are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts . . . In our days, though [hu]mankind is stricken with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, it often raises anxious questions about the current trend of the world, about the place and role of man [women and men] in the universe, about the meaning of its individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity (*Gaudium et Spes* #1:3). This is the place of Lasallian universities, where the destiny of humanity lies and an attempt is made to answer ultimate questions.³¹

Endnotes

1. This article was originally the script for a presentation in March 2017 to the Regional Mission Council of the Lasallian Region of North American (RELAN). Later, it was revised and expanded for a presentation in January 2018 to the board of trustees of Saint Mary's College of California prior to its preparation for publication here.

2. Brother Gustavo Ramírez Barba, FSC, is the General Councilor of the Brothers of the Christian Schools who accompanies the higher educational sector of the Lasallian educational network. He received an EdD from the University of San Francisco and previously served as Visitor of the District of North Mexico and president / rector of Universidad de La Salle Noroeste.

3. International Association of Lasallian Universities.

4. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, “Opening Address,” IALU *Encuentro VII*, Barcelona, January 2004. [This address is scheduled to be published in December 2018 in issue #9.3 of *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education*.].

5. Brother Léon Lauraire, FSC, *Cahiers Lasalliens* #61: The Conduct of Schools, A Contextual Approach (Rome, 2008), pages 78-80.

6. For more details, see Joan Landeros’ “The Lasallian International University Network: Progress and Promise” in Bulletin #252 (Rome, 2010), pages 5-18.

7. Since the writing of this article, two other Lasallian institutions of higher education have become members of IALU: Instituto Centroamericano de Ciencias Religiosas in Mixco, Guatemala, & Christ the Teacher School of Education of Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya (which since 1996 had been an institute of Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota).

8. Carlos Coelho, PhD, JD.

9. Carlos Coelho, “Identity Meets Internationalization: The Case of the International Association of La Salle Universities,” pages 1-17. [This article is scheduled to be published in December 2018 in issue #9.3 of *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education*.].

10. The Carnegie Classification “was created by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1970.” It provides a “classification framework” that allows “comparison across the years.”

11. John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of Christian Schools*, translated by F. de La Fontainerie and Brother Richard Arnandez, FSC, and edited with notes by Brother William Mann (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996).

12. Esthermsmth, “Andragogy – Adult Learning Theory (Knowles)” in Learning Theories, 30 September 2017. [<https://www.learning-theories.com/andragogy-adult-learning-theory-knowles.html>].

13. The *Encuentro* is the regular meeting of the presidents / rectors of Lasallian higher education institutions. In order of occurrence, they are: *Encuentro I* of 1978 in Cuernavaca, Mexico; *Encuentro II* of 1988 in Cuernavaca, Mexico; *Encuentro III* of 1991 in Rome, Italy; *Encuentro IV* of 1994 in Moraga, USA; *Encuentro V* of 1998 in Rome, Italy; *Encuentro VI* of 2001 in Manila, Philippines; *Encuentro VII* of 2004 in Barcelona, Spain; *Encuentro VIII* of 2007

in Canoas, Brazil; *Encuentro IX* of 2009 in Philadelphia, USA; *Encuentro X* of 2012 in Manila, Philippines; *Encuentro XI* of 2015 in Bogota, Colombia; and *Encuentro XII* of 2018 in Mexico City, Mexico.

14. Archives of the International Association of La Salle Universities.

15. NAFSA is the Association of International Education, which according to its website “is the world’s largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange.”

16. RELAN is an acronym for the Institute’s Lasallian Region of North America.

17. Cf. “Lasallians in the World Solving Real Problems of the World: Research Agenda of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (Revised)” in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* #7.2 (2016).

18. Coehlo, pages 6-7.

19. The four General Chapters of the Brothers of the Christian Schools being here referenced are: the 42nd General Chapter of 1993, the 43rd General Chapter of 2000, the 44th General Chapter of 2007, and the 45th General Chapter of 2014.

20. Brother John Johnston, FSC (1986-2000), Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC (2000-2014), and Brother Robert Schieler, FSC (2014-present).

21. *Circular 469: Documents of the 45th General Chapter. This Work of God Is Also Our Work* (Rome, 2014) #3.21 on pages 26-27.

22. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, “Opening Address,” IALU *Encuentro VII*, Barcelona, January 2004.

23. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, “Opening Address,” IALU *Encuentro VIII*, Canoas 2007. [This address is scheduled to be published in December 2018 in issue #9.3 of *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education*.]

24. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, “Opening Address,” IALU *Encuentro VIII*, Canoas 2007.

25. Brothers of the Christian Schools, “CIAMEL Statutes,” #4.1.4.

26. *Circular 469*, #3.22 on page 27.

27. Cf. #3.22 on page 27 in *Circular 469*, #3.22.

28. *Circular 469*, page 28.

29. “Final Report,” *Encuentro XI*, Bogotá 2015.
30. Coehlo, pages 8 and 9.
31. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, “The Lasallian Mission at the Tertiary Level” in *Bulletin #252: Lasallian Centers of Higher Education* (Rome, 2010), page 38.