

**President's Annual Address on the state of the University**  
**UDLAP 2011-2012**  
**Dr. Luis E. Derbez. March 29, 2012**

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## **Introduction**

Members of the Academic and Administrative Councils of the university:

In fulfillment of article 12, fraction XV, of our *Estatuto Orgánico de la Universidad de las Américas Puebla*, I address this joint session to present the Annual Report of Activities for the period 2011-2012. As I deliver the report to you, I am also requesting your authorization to make it available to all members of the university's community through its publication in our webpage.

In a recent article, Gabriel Zaid recalls that in 2008 Pablo Latapí published his book *Una buena educación: Reflexiones sobre la calidad*, in which he summed up his vast experience in Mexican education by recommending the following four principles to those institutions of higher education wishing to provide the highest standards of quality in their endeavours:

- 1) To educate well is above all, to instill character, demand discipline in the use of the student's time, and help him organize his activities as well as those of others.
- 2) Student's intelligence must be educated through the use of proper language. To accomplish this, it is necessary to provide him with general culture in his studies helping him to think critically and to be able to continue learning independently during the rest of his life.
- 3) Sensitivity must be nourished. An institution of higher education that wishes to be recognized for its quality must offer its students a program that encourages imagination, creativity, appreciation of beauty, sensitivity towards other people's feelings and compassion for those in need; in short, a university must provide through its programs education that defines us as human.
- 4) Education limited to the pursuit of professional excellence and success as its only goals, creates underdeveloped human beings. A good education must integrate the wish to become with the capacity to respond to other people's needs. It should allow students to keep alive their ability to marvel at each dawn and at each small miracle which daily life has to offer to us. It must integrate values with the desire for success, the only way in which individuals will exercise their God's given freedom responsibly.

Our work during the past twelve months bears witness to the fact that our university has accomplished these principles. Indeed, the work carried out in this period demonstrates that we are a community gathered around one common objective: let UDLAP be known as the university with the highest academic quality in Latin America.

We can be sure that we are on the way of achieving this objective through the recognition obtained during the past year. In June of 2011 the university received the distinction as Institution

**Informe de Actividades UDLAP 2011-2012**

**of Academic Excellence** by *Secretaría de Educación Pública del Gobierno Federal* (Mexico's Federal Ministry of Education), joining a select group of 34 universities in the country who have been awarded this recognition. Additionally, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) granted us a Level VI grade on our accreditation, a level reserved for universities considered as Research Institutions. With this distinction, SACS publicly acknowledges that UDLAP fulfills not only the highest standards of education, but also those of any other research institution in the USA.

Our academic quality is recognized as well by our continuous rise in various international and national rankings that compare us to other Mexican and international universities. I have said many times that we will not base our actions as a university on rankings; nevertheless, I cannot fail to mention our improvement in those rankings over the past four years. For instance, in the last national ranking of Mexican universities published by the newspaper *El Universal*, UDLAP's ranking in the overall category showed an advance from the 8<sup>th</sup> place obtained in 2010 to the 5<sup>th</sup> place in 2011. More important, with this advance UDLAP is now classified as the top private institution of higher education in Mexico amongst all those which participate in this poll. In addition, we participated for the first time in *QS World University Ranking* that evaluates the academic quality of 700 universities around the world, and we were recognized as the second best private university in Mexico, and as the 46<sup>th</sup> best among all universities in Latin America.

In the evaluations of degree programs, our *Licenciaturas* performed remarkably well both in the national rankings of *El Universal*--as well as in the regional rankings conducted by another of Mexico's most prestigious national newspapers *Reforma*. Both results confirmed that the effort made by our faculty in accrediting at the degree level our programs during the period 2011-2012 is bearing fruit. With a few exceptions, our *licenciaturas* maintained or improved their positions with respect to those of 2011, and many had a significant advance in their evaluation. Worthy of mentioning are our program in Business Administration which rose from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> position at the national evaluation. Accounting which did advance from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup>; and Mechanical Engineering, Industrial Engineering and Actuarial Science which are now considered the best programs in Mexico. Regarding the *Reforma* regional rankings, where 67 universities of the Puebla region participated, out of seven *licenciaturas* in which we participated our programs obtained first place in Business Administration, Communications, and Systems Engineering, and second place in Architecture, Law and Psychology. Both rankings at the national and regional level confirm the academic quality of our university.

Our graduate programs are also performing well in national and international evaluations of their quality. The ranking of *América Economía* positioned UDLAP's School of Business and Economics as the third best school at the national level and as the 19<sup>th</sup> best in Latin America. The 2012 ranking of the *Best MBA programs in Mexico*, published by the magazine *Expansión* placed our program in fifth place. Both results confirm the quality of our faculty, the high standards used in selecting entering students, the national and international accreditations of the School, our strong exchange programs and the prestige that the institution has internationally. Finally, our graduate programs in Corporate Finance, IT Administration, Business Administration and Marketing were ranked as the top programs by *EDUniversal* in December, 2011.

We are proud of these achievements. But we are more proud of the fact that High School students and their parents increasingly choose UDLAP as their university of choice. As I have already informed you, the tendency initiated in 2009 resulted by August 2011 in enrollments of incoming classes which have kept on a yearly basis a rate of increase of 20%. And we are even prouder by the fact that once enrolled, the quality of our faculty and our academic programs motivates most of our students to stay and graduate from our university. As a result, as of January 2012 the dropout rate reached its lowest historical percentage recorded in UDLAP: 2.9%. This preference to start, follow through and graduate at our institution is the best recognition of our academic quality we can dream of.

The updating and revision made to our academic programs in the year that ends assure us that the recognition to our academic quality will improve. This academic revision, work out by our faculty during 2011-2012 demonstrates our constant search to remain at the frontier of knowledge. It will provide us as an institution with a competitive advantage over all institutions of higher education in Mexico, and represents the best offer of undergraduate academic programs in the country as it keeps our programs socially relevant at the same time that with the highest standards of professional and academic quality. Our institution offers now 54 *licenciatura* programs (12 of new creation) that: i) respond to the requirements imposed by the knowledge society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; ii) incorporate the opinion of our graduates and other professionals in working in Mexico and abroad; iii) guarantee our graduates the social pertinence of their programs of study. Complementing the work of the academic area, the administrative area worked hard to accredit all requirements imposed by Mexico's Federal Ministry of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública Federal*) and by national and international accreditation organisms of each professional program (*licenciatura*), so that starting in August 2012 all our *licenciatura* programs will have federal accreditation.

Having finished the review of all our *licenciatura* programs and its registration as federal accredited ones, before the start of our academic year which begins in August, 2012, our university demonstrated once again that its academic standards respond to the highest requirements in order to achieve the top academic standards possible. Our teaching-learning model—that advances innovative education and the use of technology in teaching--will continue to improve thanks to a well thought investment program in new laboratories, technological equipment and other teaching innovation models which add to every one of our undergraduate programs the best educational technology standards in years to come. With emphasis on the quality and pertinence of our academic programs, we ensure that our students will have the capacity to manage cutting edge technical tools, intellectual competence to face the challenges of globalization, and the sensitivity needed to help those members of society most in need. The doubts in the minds of many of those who thought that impossible to achieve have been dispelled: our academic quality shines brightly in each and every one of our new undergraduate programs.

To strengthen our academic excellence, we continue to increase the number of our full time faculty. Recruiting in the last three years has enriched our faculty, and we are close to reaching the goal set in 2008: to have more than 300 full time professors before the end of the academic year 2012. I want to announce today that we have set two more goals for the year 2020: to have 600 full time professors; and, even though at present more than 75% of our full time professors

have Masters and PhDs in their discipline, our goal for 2020 is that 80 % of our faculty have a PhD degree.

The effort to link professional practices with the demands of national and international companies is a feature of the new programs that will begin in August 2012; and our research programs will respond to such demands. Once the research doctorates are defined by our faculty, theoretical investigation in areas jointly determined as emblematic for the university will allow us to set unique lines of research. Determining the areas, and stressing the relevance of professional practices will allow us to offer not only the best combination of theory and practice you can find in Mexico, but to develop research projects that place us in a privileged position at the national and international level, making UDLAP a dynamic institution that achieves the objective that we planned from the beginning of this administration: to become the best university in Latin America and to be recognized internationally by our quality.

I said it last year and I will say it again: these results come from the joint effort of all members of the university community. I want to highlight once more the work of those individuals who constitute the collegiate bodies present here today. Each one of them has shown a deep love for the university; their active participation, professionalism when considering the new academic and administrative policies that rule the institution, their permanent search for the wellbeing of the university community and their ability to provide solutions to multiple questions that affect the institutional life have been the columns that support the success obtained this year. Thanks to their effort, I begin a new year heading a university that in the year 2011-2012 has become the referent for other private institutions of higher learning because of the quality of its academic programs, the quality of its faculty and the quality of its graduates.

Four years of joint effort have passed, and we continue to show that we are a strong community, a community united by a common purpose, a community with the highest standard of academic excellence. We have proved that we are willing to make hard decisions, carry them through with transparency and respond to adversity with the concerted goal to provide education of the highest standards. It is evident that if we continue to work as the University of Excellence that we are today, we will systematically meet and overcome all challenges in the future.

### **Quality and Transparency in Decision Making**

Following our transparency policy, throughout the year the proceedings of the meetings of the Academic, Administrative and Business Councils have been accessible to all members of the university community. Debates of the Academic Council helped in studying and adapting the curriculum reforms proposed by the Academic Vice-presidency, aiding in improving the programs that were finally approved for the new degrees. Likewise, the decision by the Academic Council to extend the deadline to finalize the definition of our new Master programs, will enrich the quality that those programs will have at the end of the period dedicated to discuss and approve them.

The elections to replace part of the members of both university councils, Deans of our Schools and Department Heads which took place during 2011 the democratic rules upon which the university rules itself since 2008. Faculty, administrative staff and all students have participated in selecting the list of three candidates from which new appointments were made, ensuring that the voice of

all members of the UDLAP community are heard when important decisions are taken at the university. For the fourth time a committee constituted by elected members from the three sectors (faculty, administrative staff and students) of the university prepared the university's 2011-2012 budget, confirming that transparency is the main rule in managing our institution, and the reason why all members of the community are confident about all decisions taken in it. This participation and transparency ensure that difficult decisions that we need to take as a community are always supported by a large majority of its members.

Another proof of our transparent way of doing things in the institution was the creation during 2011 of the Ethics Committee of the university, integrated by freely elected student, faculty and staff representatives, as well as by member of the Academic and Administrative Councils of UDLAP. The Code of Ethics acknowledges the principles of behavior that members of the university agree upon and establishes as institutional values freedom with responsibility, tolerance and non discrimination, honesty, integrity, solidarity and transparency.

During the year that ends the work of all members of the Business Council made sure that financial and labor related decisions in the university were taken with full transparency. The work of Business Council was firmly and enthusiastically led by Mr. Pedro Velasco, who began his cycle as President of the council in 2011 and counts with the full support of the university community. I want to thank—in my name and in that of all members of UDLAP--the Business Council for their support and advice during this time; without both many achievements of the institution would not have been possible. With the joint effort of its integrants, businessmen, students, administrative staff and faculty, this council ensures the administrative independence and freedom of expression required to remain on the successful path begun by the university four years ago. It is also a shield against external influences that might eventually wish to hamper our work at the university. I thank each and every person that participates in this Business Council for their enduring work to make UDLAP the best that it can be.

I cannot fail to mention the support and commitment of all members of our Board of Trustees. Over the past four years the Board has given us the financial and moral backing that has allowed us to reach our financial and academic stability, while at the same time firmly respecting the freedom of expression and academic freedom of all members of the university community. Without their support we would not have consolidated our administrative and academic prestige as much as we have in the past four years.

## **Conclusion**

Members of the Academic and Administrative Councils of *Universidad de las Américas Puebla*: I will not delve more on the achievements of this administration in the year 2011-2012; they can be read in full in the CD that we have given you at the beginning of this event. The report could also be obtained by any member of the university community in our web page once you authorize its open distribution. With humility I must stress that the content of this report is not the work of one person: it represents the work of a community.

This Annual Report 2011-2012 presents many accomplishments of our community in the past twelve months -there is no doubt that many others have gone unreported-they all are the result of

the UDLAP family's work. At the end of the cycle April 2011-March 2012, *Universidad de las Américas Puebla* continues to show all that the institution has the best academic quality in Mexico, since it has been recognized worldwide and has obtained accreditations at the national and international level for *licenciaturas* and graduate degrees. More important, the transformation of our programs and the launching of twelve new *licenciatura* programs make clear that we are a university where innovation and academic quality are not empty words, but permanent activities for the good of our students and the future of the world.

Today, we must continue to work as a university community to consolidate the academic-administrative identity of UDLAP. I call on you to continue to work as a team during the next twelve months to accomplish a solid multicultural environment—despite the problems of insecurity in the country—so the academic quality of our faculty gets even stronger, with more full time professors and big investments in laboratory equipment and academic facilities; at the same time, to foster academic research always ensuring financial soundness, so we can have a university that keeps growing in quality, warmth and above all in fulfilling a social responsibility towards Mexico, giving more financial aid to those students that need it.

My commitment to you is to keep working tirelessly to achieve our objective and be recognized indisputably as the best private university in Latin America.

Thank you very much!