

AUSJAL *al día*

General Assembly. Special Edition

AUSJAL extends to La Paz and Acapulco

During the 15th General Assembly of AUSJAL, held from May 27th to 30th, two new AUSJAL members have been incorporated: the «Luis Espinal» Higher Institute of Philosophy and Humanities (Cochabamba, Bolivia) and the «Loyola» Pacific University (Acapulco, Mexico) so that now the association has extended to 31 universities and 15 countries of Latin America. During the meeting that took place in Cali, Colombia, Susana Di Trolio AUSJAL Executive Secretary presented the administration report for the term 2005-2007 as well as the balances and financial reports. These reports highlight the actions that have been carried out in order to institutionally enhance the Executive Secretariat and the networks of peers, especially inter-universities virtual programs, research projects, legal and financial aspects of the organization and communicational policy of the association. The Secretary gave special attention in her report to the worldwide educative and social Jesuit networks, and she also pointed out the different events that took place during this term. Professor Di Trolio emphasized the importance of continuing a **coordinated decentralization strategy** for the association initiatives and projects. At the end of her report, the Secretary proposed to the Assembly that AUSJAL's future, consolidation possibilities and growth should be analyzed; and she raised the question: What do we want to make of AUSJAL?

During the discussion of this question, the Assembly indicated that the path walked confirms AUSJAL appropriateness as well as the importance that it continues offering spaces and projects for universities that other university associations do not have, in order to think together about the university's meaning and key issues in the Latin America situation.

The assembly also expects that more projects and mechanisms for mutual support will be developed in order to become and consolidate as high quality universities with social appropriateness. They emphasized that selection basis for AUSJAL projects and initiatives should meet those issues that only AUSJAL can undertake, due to its Jesuit inspiration, and that other universities will not carry out for sure.

Luis Ugalde sj, AUSJAL President lectured on the beginning of a new phase in the history of the Jesuit Society and analyzed the universities role in the face of humanity new threats. He also talked about the association's perspectives as a network and also emphasized that AUSJAL represents a more significant form of national and Latin-American University in each country.

He call on the members to make a financial effort

for AUSJAL that would enhance a strategy where each university will be strengthened as a Latin-American networking institution and where each of them will also keep its national identity.

The Assembly gave its approval to a change in the association By-laws that allows the incorporation of a new vice-president, as a way to promote the presence of regions inside the Board of Directors. The selected Board is form by Luis Ugalde s.j., President of «Universidad Católica Andrés Bello» as the association president for the 2007-2009 term; and Jesus Hortal s.j. President of «Pontificia Universidad Católica de Rio de Janeiro», Luis Rafael Velasco s.j. President of «Universidad Católica de Córdoba» and Jose Maria Tojeira s.j. President of UCA (El Salvador) as vice-presidents; Susana Di Trolio, was ratified as Executive Secretary.

Beyond AUSJAL

Another important issue of the Assembly was the letter of understanding between the AUSJAL universities and JesuitNet (Jesuit Distance Education Network) from AJCU that will allow students to register for undergraduate and postgraduate online courses and programs offered by the member universities of both associations.

Gerardo Remolina s.j. President of PUJ-Bogota and Vice-president of FIUC representing Latin America, during his speech about AUSJAL in the context of Christian universities in Latin America, reflected on the question «What can we do as AUSJAL?» and presented four possibilities: to assure our Jesuit identity; to touch on untouchable issues; to collaborate inside the existing tendencies; to foster the organization of catholic universities associations with Christian inspiration. About ODUICAL he pointed out that it is part of the FIUC regional groups and that a new Board of Directors has been elected for a new strengthening period.

The AUSJAL assembly was honored with the presence of Paul Locatelli s.j., Higher Education Secretary for the Jesuit Society, President of the Santa Clara University and Representative in the AJCU Assembly; Jesus Montero Tirado, s.j., Coordinator of CPAL Education Sector; Jorge Cela, s.j., Coordinator of «Fe y Alegria» International Federation; José Leonardo Rincon s.j, President of the Latin American Federation of Jesuit Schools; Jorge Julio Mejia s.j., Coordinator of the CPAL Social Sector; Jaime Oraá s.j., President of the «Universidad de Deusto» (Spain) and Representative of the Jesuit Universities

Association of Spain; René Cardozo s.j., President of the Luis Espinal Institute in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Mr. Sergio Lopez Vela President of the «Universidad Loyola del Pacifico», Acapulco, México.

Challenges and Priorities for the next decade

Eighteen members of the AUSJAL network outlined the most important challenges and priorities for the Jesuit higher education institutions for the next decade and talked about their joint experiences as well as those with other apostolic works. The Assembly reflected on the basis of an initial systematization made by Arturo Sosa, s.j., and José Morales Orozco, s.j., presidents of «Universidad Católica del Táchira» (Venezuela) and «Universidad Iberoamericana» (Mexico City), respectively.

The outlined challenges and priorities for Jesuit higher-education institutions were: strengthening the identity of the Jesuit higher-education institutions; administration adapted to the mission; staff formation on institutional identity; economic sustainability; creation of a network of networks; participation in the creation dialogue; quality and equality; technological and humanistic vanguard; public compromise; and connection to society.

New term projects

Regarding the new initiatives for 2007-2009 term, Executive Secretary presented general guidelines for the formulation of a Training Program on Ignacian University Management. During the discussions over the document, it was stressed as a fundamental need the implementation of a formation program that emphasizes on the key elements of identity and strengths tools for an efficient university administration. The Assembly expressed its approval to undertake this initiative and pointed out that it should take advantage from other existing experiences.

Additionally, Joaquin Sanchez sj, President of PUJ (Cali, Colombia) presented an introduction about university social responsibility. He emphasized the importance of Social Responsibility in our educational and non educational organizations and the need of taking specific actions every day; He also presented some guidelines to be considered on this subject. Professors Omayra Parra and Claudia Mora completed the discussions with great presentations about the state of arts of Social Responsibility in AUSJAL universities and the process that PUJ-Cali followed on this matter.

Susana Di Trolio executive secretary summarized the process achieved on University Social Responsibility. She informed about the organization of 11 videoconferences that have allowed building the Networks of Peers in University Social Responsibility. Finally, she mentioned the document called «Guidelines for defining a project of institutional strengthening on Social Responsibility in AUSJAL universities».

Regarding this document, she explained the results that are expected after the implementation of this project and submitted it for the Assembly's approval. The majority of university presidents expressed their support and interest on participating in this project.

The scenario of the AUSJAL assembly allowed the responsible for University-Leadership projects and for the AUSJAL Continental Course on Poverty to present the situation of their projects to the group of university presidents.

Alexei Arbona Coordinator of the AUSJAL Network on Poverty presented the results of the project for 2007 and the network's agenda towards 2010. At this moment, the Network offers the AUSJAL Continental Course on Poverty in Latin America. It has 880 graduates, 47 tutors, 16 related universities, 12 national cases and it has made an international seminar and two publications.

Professor Arbona talked about the interest of AJCU universities in joining to the course. He also informed about that the formulation of the AUSJAL project for an observatory about poverty in Latin America has been accomplished and that now the Project is in the process of fundraising.

Raúl Hernán Restrepo s.j., talked about the pilot phase of the leadership program and about the participation of PUJ-Bogota, PUJ-Cali, Rafael Landivar University, UIA-Leon and UCAB.