

Chapter 7

Academic Cooperation and Collaboration Between Cutonala and the City of San Antonio, Texas: A Recent Window of Opportunity.

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A few years ago, a group of professional academics in their field took on the responsibility of expanding international relations beyond traditional forms such as academic exchanges, partnerships, and reciprocal visits. This is clearly a very commendable initiative that seeks to broaden the framework of relations between nations, universities, and citizens in the 21st century.

What is relevant about the process is that those who have initiated this project have done it with the good intention of bringing both institutions closer together as a starting point and of developing an agenda of actions that is coordinated jointly between people from both latitudes.

It all starts from one of the principles of *Bona Fide* law, or good faith.

The project is particularly interesting as it includes academics, emeritus professors, civil servants, and independent professionals from the state of Texas. All of them have enthusiastically managed to organize meetings for more than five years, suspended only during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022.

The beginning

The starting point was when two doctors of law, graduates of the University of Guadalajara with extensive experience as teachers and in their professional lives, decided to establish international relations that would begin to promote diverse exchanges.

The authors were Dr. Ángel Guillermo Ruiz Moreno, a full-time research professor at the University of Guadalajara, a member of the Prodep program and the National System of Researchers Level III, President of the National Academy of Law, author of books and articles on labor law and social security, and widely recognized internationally, as well as being a Professor Emeritus at his own university. The other person responsible for the project was Dr. Roberto Rosas Rodríguez, a lawyer who graduated from the University of Guadalajara. He pursued postgraduate studies at various universities in the United States, such as Harvard Graduate School of Business and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and in England at the Oxford Centre for Management Studies, focusing on comparative Mexican-U.S. law, administrative science, and

canon law on marriage. He holds a doctorate in law from the European University of Madrid.

He has been a professor and researcher at the St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio, Texas, since 1994.

Combining their interests, the project began in 2013 and since then, academic and training exchanges with teachers and professionals from Texas and Jalisco have been held regularly each year.

The first academic event was held in the city of Guadalajara, with Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades (CUSH) as its venue.

This event marked a beginning that continues to attract more and more interest from the field of law, which is the discipline around which the entire topic has revolved.

The initial topics were: Law and Social Security, Labor Law, International Arbitration, the National Legal System, the U.S. Legal System, Private Property, and Human Rights, among others.

On several occasions, officials who are part of the Jalisco government structure have been invited as speakers, mainly from the areas of governance, law enforcement, and legislation. Similarly, professors from the law program at the University of Guadalajara and later from the Western Institute of Higher Studies (ITESO) have participated.

The importance of international collaboration

With the onset of globalization in the last decade of the 20th century, the world began to change. What had been the solution until then began to become a thing of the past. The world, with its bipolar characteristics, antagonisms, and ideological divisions, was transformed into a global opening where new forms encompassed a geopolitical, globalizing, and neoliberal interpretation.

The economy was transformed into strategies of large economic parties where trade agreements were a point of connection rather than separation between nations. In this new environment, what had previously been a source of division became a point of unity and collaboration.

These new forms of global action, such as collaboration, exchange, and bilateral relations outside the political sphere, began to take on importance. Differences were no longer an obstacle to joint activities.

Thus, two decades of this century have passed in constant progress and a sum of activities. The relationship now established between professionals in Texas and Jalisco is clearly not new. The most important points began during the administration of Guillermo Cosío Vidaurri between 1989 and 1992. Commercial, cultural, and tourist relations increased. And they were the starting point.

Academic and exchange relations have been strengthened with the decisive support of Dr. Roberto Rosas Rodríguez, who year after year seeks to bring together experts in law from Texas and Jalisco to exchange ideas.

A globalized world of openness and exchange

The last decade of the 20th century saw the beginning of the so-called period of globalization and neoliberalism. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the change of government in Romania, and the fall of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu in late 1989 triggered the end of the bipolar and antagonistic era between two hemispheres and, shortly thereafter, the end of the Cold War.

These and other circumstances led to a global opening in various fields. Trade relations became global and organized into economic parties and international agreements and treaties. Diplomacy took on a different character, shifting toward geopolitics. As a result, universities were transformed from internal centers of education to centers of comprehensive human development for the 21st century.

Education began to internationalize both in Mexico and around the world. The traditional university vision changed from a model that looked inward to one more linked to the outside world. In other words, the endogenous was set aside in favor of the exogenous. In this way, the proposal for educational internationalization forced us to accelerate our national processes in response to international demands. International cooperation, academic exchanges, and links between academics, researchers, and independent professionals were and are part of the new role between nations. As a starting point, in 1996 a book was presented that served as a guide to new global educational relationships.

The document was called *Education holds a treasure*.

Jacques Delors,³ as chairman of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, submitted his working report, which was the book, to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The project had one primary goal: to conceive of education as the means to face the future in a desirable and achievable way.

The proposal focused on the need to implement continuous, lifelong education from childhood, with the aim of linking endless learning as an essential part of being human throughout life.

From their point of view, it was necessary to implement lifelong learning from early childhood. Learning to learn and to know thus became the idea for entering the 21st century with a proposal.

Education came to play a leading role in global decisions, supported by UNESCO, the⁴, and other international financial and advisory bodies.

³ Jacques Delors (born July 20, 1925 in Paris, France, died December 27, 2023) was a French statesman who served as president of the European Commission, the executive body of the European Community that eventually became the European Union, from 1985 to 1995. Delors joined the Socialist Party in 1974 and in 1976 became the party's national delegate for international economic relations. In 1979, he was elected to the European Parliament, where he chaired the economic and monetary committee. In 1981, François Mitterrand became president and appointed Delors as Minister of Economy and Finance. The French economy was then in recession, and Delors initially implemented the socialist recovery plan of increased controls and public spending. However, he eventually convinced Mitterrand to accept his austerity program, which succeeded in restoring relative economic stability. Delors left the government to become president of the *European Commission* in 1985. He revitalized the EC, pushing through reforms and overseeing the entry into force of the *Single European Act* in 1987, as well as the *Maastricht Treaty*. The latter, which came into force in 1993, created the EU. At the end of his term in 1995, he was considered one of the leading candidates for the French presidency that year, but he declined to run. <https://www-britannica-com.translate.goog/biography/Jacques-Delors>

⁴ Founded in London in 1946, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has never funded any experimental research projects itself. Instead, it has contributed significantly to the development of education systems by sending experts and consultants, through its work in curriculum development and educational planning, and through its support for innovation. The organization's main areas of focus in the field of education are: basic education; secondary education; lifelong learning; women's education; education and minority groups; new information technol-

The new model was justified on the premise of:

- learning to do,
- learning to live together
- learning to be, and
- learning to learn.

This model of discourse permanent or continuous learning was soon referred to as “competency-based” or “life skills”.⁵

Given this global historical background, the educational transition to international linkage models was imperative. Universities are increasingly initiating peer outreach programs and setting the stage for non-academic graduates to collaborate with faculty and jointly carry out professional outreach activities such as seminars, courses, meetings, and various publications.

The importance of relations between academia and professionals across nations

Higher education institutions today reflect the new statement that emphasizes productivity, terminal efficiency, cost-benefit analysis, administrative efficiency and streamlining of the administrative apparatus, a greater range of educational options, a broader approach to human resources, economic resource planning based on previous budgets and programs, performance and efficiency indicators, unit and total costs, and links between academics and professionals, among other things. Education is a way of social liberation and a strategy for enriching citizens, helping them understand their place in society, and reaffirming their personal identity.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the importance of mutual generation and collaboration between universities and professionals.

1. Relationships flow positively in educational and professional cooper-

ogies, education, and human rights. In higher education, the focus is on: importance and improvement; gender equality in education; promotion and integration; diversification and improvement of distance learning; relevance, quality, and internationalization.

⁵ Education holds a treasure, report to UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (compendium).

ation, strengthening relations between nations.

2. As time has passed, university education and its internationalization programs have come to be understood as *cultural diplomacy*.
3. As time passes, the links between universities and professionals have strengthened. Peer exchange trips are frequent, research in various fields has increased, and bilingual co-publications are increasingly part of institutional evaluation criteria by international and national accreditors.
4. Crossing borders is no longer a utopian dream but a reality.
5. International cooperation from the perspective of the state has had an impact on universities by facilitating understanding and better comprehension. Its relevance impacts fields such as technology, social and legal sciences, medical and biomedical sciences, and the exchange and transmission of knowledge.
6. It has strengthened binational relations between associations and professionals by creating groups for job exchange, mutual support, and professional synergies.
7. The aim is to work on a joint agenda of greater general knowledge, better social justice, respect for human rights, comparison of legislative and legal frameworks, and strengthening innovation with increasing relevance and impact.
8. Intercultural relations are strengthened. This facilitates mutual understanding and contributes to the creation of applied professional research networks, promoting employment opportunities and professional development.
9. They are sources of reciprocal foreign investment, capable of generating jobs and achieving mutual economic benefits. It is a “win-win” approach.
10. Finally, professionals from different countries, in addition to sharing their experiences, techniques, and knowledge, facilitate the development of commercial products that contribute to economic and social growth in a wide variety of areas.

Challenges and difficulties in professional relationships in collaboration and cooperation between professionals.

The above describes the opportunities and benefits achieved in bilateral relations between nations and professionals, such as the relationship between Texas and the University Center of Tonalá.

However, it is not without difficulties, and thinking that everything is easy and uncomplicated can be risky and imprudent.⁶

Below are some of the difficulties.

1. Different cultures. Each society is capable of generating its own identity that distinguishes it and makes it different from others. The differences can be considerable. Socio-cultural and historical backgrounds can have a decisive influence.

2. The language barrier. Linguistic differences can be an obstacle to establishing common criteria. Communication can hinder collaboration and mutual understanding between professionals from different countries who speak different languages. It is advisable to define a common language. English has been adopted as a lingua franca, but this does not eliminate certain difficulties, even within the same business organization.

3. Cultural diversity. From a historical perspective, it can be said that much of the world revolves around a Western identity perspective, where many ideas and concepts are similar. The Western world shares elements such as representative and participatory democracy, freedom of speech, individual freedom and equality, social and human rights, social justice, separation of powers (executive, legislative, judicial), the rule of law, the federal republic, capitalism and the market economy, humanism, and, more recently, gender equality and cultural diversity. However, in other parts of the world, these concepts are not shared, even in contemporary America.

4. Work culture and labor-management relations, as well as working conditions in terms of hours and, above all, wages, can be an obstacle.

⁶ As further reading on the topic of asymmetries and symmetries in professional, diplomatic, and university international relations, we recommend the following website. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/bilateral-relations>

Union relations and partisan political influences in this field play a diverse role, as does the balance between work and personal life.⁷

5. Philosophical background. There are five predominant factors in this area: Greek philosophy and its thinkers, Roman law and its legal tradition, canon law, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and 19th-century liberal thought, the century of the Enlightenment. Their interpretation in the Western world does not pose a problem, but it does in other parts of the world.⁸

6. Finally, a greater number of discrepancies and challenges may arise when academic and professional relationships are established. In the case of the Western perspective, although some common elements have been mentioned, there are also asymmetries. The current *Western world* is a broad concept evolving in two ways: the European one with its vast socio-historical background and the American one with just over two hundred years of independence and the gestation of its modern states, so that characteristics may differ between regions and nations.⁹

Given the above, this is a significant challenge for universities and higher education institutions, which is why the University of Guadalajara has carried out various activities that have had an impact on all university centers and have enabled links to be established with other higher education institutions in different countries. One of the areas in which this institution has invested is in English language teaching, considering level B1 or B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference in its degree programs. With this, various strategies for teaching English have been established in both face-to-face and self-directed modalities for both

⁷ In relation to point no. 4, we recommend reading the following page: <https://blogs.uoc.edu/edcp/es/relaciones-internacionales-perfiles-laborales-y-adaptacion-al-nuevo-contexto-global/>

⁸ To expand on concept 5, we recommend the following page. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/western-world>

⁹ This reading explains Latin American integration into the Western world. Its value lies in the fact that it was an essential reference at the beginning of this millennium and century. Montaner Carlos Alberto. *Latin Americans and Western Culture*. Series: Biographies and Documents. Ed. Norma Editores. 2003. Printed in Colombia. ISBN. 958-04-7641-1

students and teachers. These programs have been successful because it is a requirement for graduation to have proof of the level required for the degree to which one aspires. In addition to this, courses are also offered in different countries, as well as the mobility to study some subjects at other foreign universities. On the other hand, teachers are also offered courses to master different languages within the state and outside the country in mobility programs resulting from partnerships. Furthermore, collaboration between peers, postgraduate courses, postdoctoral stays, research, among others, at different universities has become increasingly relevant in this globalized world for sharing different teaching and research strategies.

In 2024, 38,837 students, teachers, and administrative staff¹⁰ took courses or participated in activities related to a foreign language, representing an increase of 118% from 2019 to 2024. As can be seen, the University is interested in promoting the learning of a second language not only as a requirement for graduation but also for other purposes where the use and practice of another language is required.

It is worth mentioning that there is a close relationship between engagement and second language learning, as it allows these activities to be carried out more fluently with language skills at levels B1 or B2.

In the area of language learning, 86,376 students participated in the language learning programs implemented in the University Network, representing an increase of 84.8% compared to the previous administration.

82.9% of students participated in English programs, followed by 8.8% who took French programs and 4.6% in Italian and German programs. Chinese and Japanese programs accounted for 1.5% of participation. The "other" category, which represents 2.2%, includes Catalan, Hindi, Portuguese, Hebrew, Tahitian, Korean, Russian, and Spanish for foreigners.¹¹

It can be seen that over the last six years there has been a notable increase of 94.7% and 82.9% in the number of students enrolling in French and English language programs. There has also been a considerable increase

¹⁰ Activity Report 2024, University of Guadalajara

¹¹ 2024 Activity Report, University of Guadalajara

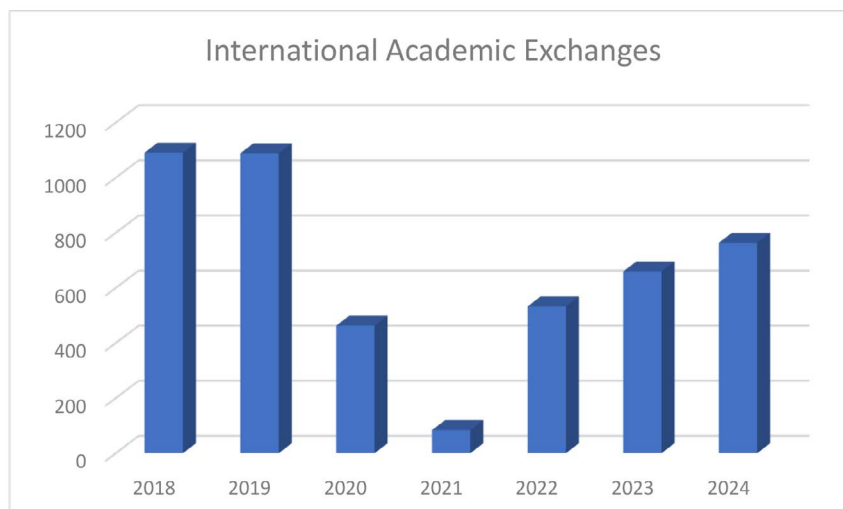
in the number of students enrolling in programs to learn Chinese.

In conclusion, it can be seen that this increase in language learning allows the University Network to increase the possibility of participating in activities related to links and exchanges between national and international higher education institutions.

The University has implemented programs that allow for the internationalization of the curriculum in the classroom, including courses for teachers to conduct mirror classes or implement the COIL9 (Collaborative Online International Learning) methodology with their students and academic peers to carry out projects, whether research, technological, etc., Different phases or steps are considered, such as training teaching staff, assigning peers (usually foreign teachers), program duration (where the strategies to be used are defined, as well as the time required for the process), forming teams to carry out innovative projects, and finally, evaluation, where the methods for evaluating each student are established according to the completion of the project.

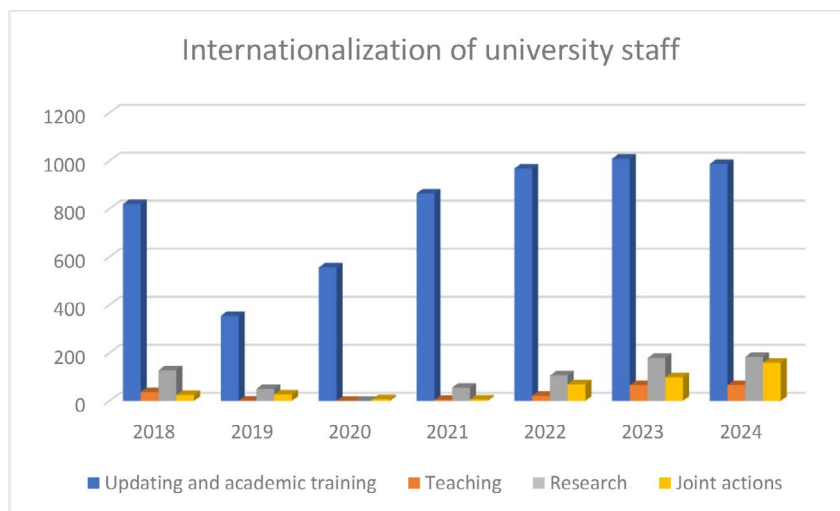
On the other hand, the University has increased the number of post-graduate programs offering double degrees, meaning that students receive a degree from the foreign university and from the University of Guadalajara. This is another part of the strengthening of ties at this institution as part of its internationalization activities. Currently, there are four master's programs offering double degrees.

Also noteworthy as part of internationalization are the mobility programs. The University of Guadalajara has national and international mobility programs. This document will focus on international mobility, providing the following figures:



Graph No. 1. Source: own, obtained from the Rector's Report, 2024

On the other hand, there are also the internationalization activities of the University of Guadalajara staff (teachers and administrators), as shown in the following graph:



Graph No. 2 Source: own, obtained from the Rector's Report, 2024

In summary, the University of Guadalajara has promoted internationalization through student-focused academic exchange programs, and it also strengthens the internationalization of university staff through different programs that benefit this link between higher education institutions at the national and international levels. However, this paper only considers the internationalization programs of academic staff. On the other hand, it also aims to highlight the link not only between higher education institutions, but also to strengthen the link programs in the productive sector both nationally and internationally.

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