

KEYS



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Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education

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# Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education

Chantal Jouannet  
Luis Arocha  
María Nieves Tapia  
Andrés Peregalli  
Andrew Furco  
Montserrat Alom Bartrolí  
Jay Brandenberger  
James Frabutt  
Bárbara Humphrey  
Donald R. McCrabb  
Amelia Blanton  
Pedro Pablo Rosso  
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Carol Ma Hok-ka  
Alfred Chan Cheung-ming  
Fanny Mak Mui-fong  
Alice Liu Cheng

The Leadership role of the President of the University in the Institutionalization processes of Service-Learning. The case of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile

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Director: María Nieves Tapia

Coordination of Uniservitate Program: María Rosa Tapia

Editorial Coordination: Jorge A. Blanco

Coordinator of this volume: Chantal Jouannet Valderrama and Luis Arocha

Proofreading and editing of texts in Spanish: Licy Miranda

Translation and editing of texts in English: Alejandra Linares

Design of the collection and of this volume: Adrián Goldfrid

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<i>Rector emeritus Pontifical Catholic University of Chile</i>	



## Chantal Jouannet Valderrama

*Is a psychologist from the University of La Frontera (UFRO) and holds a master's degree in Educational Politics from the Alberto Hurtado University of Chile. She was the Coordinator of the Christian Humanist Education Curriculum at the Catholic University of Temuco, between 2004 and 2007. Between 2007 and 2009, Chantal was one of the professionals participating in the program known as Puentes UC (Catholic University Bridges), where she connected academic resources with municipalities in the Metropolitan Region. Between 2009 and 2012, she coordinated the UC (Catholic University) Service-Learning Program, where she led the incorporation of service-learning for over ten years, and focused on the design of institutionalization models and assessment of the methodology's impact. She has also participated actively in the Service-Learning National Network. From 2012-2019 Chantal was Deputy Director of the UC Center for Teaching Development. Since 2020 she has been the Director of the Center, guiding the implementation of undergraduate and graduate online lessons, in addition to the training of university professors. As a national leader of service-learning, Chantal organizes workshops and holds conferences for educational institutions in Chile, Latin America and Europe. She is a consultant for various educational institutions. She is a member of the Service-Learning National Network and the Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship. Chantal has lectured on the methodology in national and international seminars and has published for educational journals.*



## Pedro Pablo Rosso

*Graduated as a surgeon from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in 1966, and from 1966-1969 he majored in Pediatrics. He completed his specialty studies at Cornell University, New York, in 1972. He entered Columbia University that same year, where he held several positions, including Deputy Director of the Institute of Human Nutrition. He returned to the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in 1984, where he served as Director of the Center for Medical Research (1991-1992), Dean of the School of Medicine (1992-2000) and President of the University (2000-2010). Subsequently, Pedro Pablo was President of the Organization of Catholic Universities of Latin American and the Caribbean (2009-2015) and Counselor of the National Education Council of Chile (2013-2016). Since 2012 he has been Executive Director of the Universitas Advanced Studies Group. He has published extensively on topics within his area of specialty, including the book Nutrition and Metabolism in Pregnancy: Mother and Fetus (Oxford University Press) (1990). Pedro Pablo has received numerous awards for his scientific contributions, among them the E.V. McCollum International*

*Lectureship in Nutrition, granted by the American Institute of Nutrition (1991), the Agnes Higgins Award, March of Dimes Foundation (1992), the Abraham Stekel Award, Chilean Society of Nutrition (2006), and the Doctor Scientiae et Honoris Causa, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (2017). As an advocate of environmental care, he published Aves de las Costas y Mares de Chile: Guía de Campo (2019), and was President of the Cachagua Dunes Foundation (2014-2020).*

## 8. THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY IN THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION PROCESSES OF SERVICE-LEARNING. THE CASE OF THE PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF CHILE

Chantal Jouannet Valderrama

Director Center of Teaching Development Pontifical Catholic University of Chile Center of Teaching Development

Pedro Pablo Rosso

Rector emeritus Pontifical Catholic University of Chile

### Abstract

In 2000, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (UC, for its acronym in Spanish) began the transformation process of its educational project, aimed at overcoming the paradigm of traditional professional training, offering programs that would provide, among other competencies, a set of values that would foster social engagement, enlightened by the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the value of meaningful training.

It was in this context that the first courses were created with the service-learning methodology (henceforth SL), which was considered a key element to achieve the values-based goals of the new educational proposal. The idea of offering this kind of courses came from a group of academics and was embraced by the General Student Affairs Office, which undertook the pilot experiences. Given the favorable results and a more curricular focus, the coordination of SL courses was connected to the Center for Teaching Development (CD-*Doc*, for its acronym in Spanish), and the President's Office promoted several actions with the aim of institutionalizing SL in all the university courses.

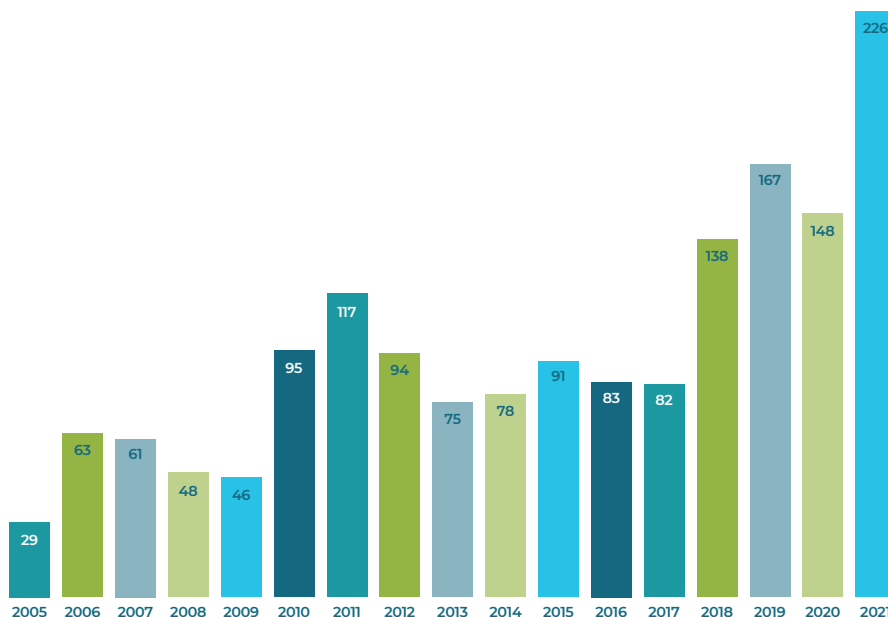
This chapter will focus, through an interview to President Emeritus Pedro Pablo Rosso, on highlighting certain key elements for the institutionalization of SL, emphasizing the importance of the president's role and leadership to implement these changes. More specifically, the chapter will address the main strengths and challenges of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile for the institutionalization of this methodology, including the university organic structure; the relationship between the UC Catholic *ethos* and the community endorsement of the SL methodology; and the relevance of the coherence between the mission of the institution and the interests of its community to generate institutional changes.

## Background

The Pontifical Catholic University of Chile formalized the creation of the Service-Learning Project at the end of 2004, following a three-year assessment conducted by a team of faculty members regarding the incorporation of community service into their courses (Zulueta and Reutter, 2006). The first strategic planning of SL at UC states that its creation was also related to *the Church's call to place the central focus on individuals, claiming that—insofar as our university embraces this call—the students and faculty become the protagonists of a process of cultural transformation, which must stem from the different processes within the university: teaching, research and extension. In other words, they must be at the heart of the teaching-learning process.* (Service-Learning Program, 2005)

During those years, the university was led by Pedro Pablo Rosso, who served as president between 2000 and 2010. He directed the UC Development Plan 2000-2005 and 2005-2010, both under the framework of the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, whose vision included training students with a values-based approach and promoting training towards entrepreneurship, integrity and solidarity, in addition to enhancing learning quality through supporting the faculty with their teaching, learning and assessment methodologies. The SL at UC Program was created during his administration, initially at the Office of Student Affairs and then at the Center for Teaching Development, which is part of the Office of the Academic Vice-President. All this was in line with the Education work plan, which expected to include in the curricula teaching-learning contents and methodologies that would favor training in solidarity, Christian values and the will of serving society.

Since its inception, the program has had a director and professionals hired with a strategic plan and objectives. In 2005, twenty-nine courses were implemented at the UC with this methodology, involving around 1500 students. During the next years, there was a steady increase in the number of courses, which currently amounts to over two hundred subjects with this methodology, and every year more than 6000 students learn through a service they perform to the community, related to the development of the learning objectives of their subject.

**FIGURE 1:** Number of subjects that incorporate the SL Methodology at the UC.

During the first years, work consisted of advising courses; then, a model for the implementation of the methodology in the subjects was developed, which would ensure the highest academic and service quality while enhancing values education (Jouannet, Salas, and Contreras, 2013). This model has a curricular focus and

*This model has a curricular focus and provides support in faculty training and consultancy, accompaniment in the selection process, and contact with community partners. It also incorporates structured reflection as a key pedagogical tool in the SL at UC and the application of an assessment instrument for community partners and students.*

provides support in faculty training and consultancy, accompaniment in the selection process, and contact with community partners. It also incorporates structured reflection as a key pedagogical tool in the SL at UC and the application of an assessment instrument for community partners and students.

With a view to achieving greater sustainability of the program, a model for institutionalizing SL in the course curriculum was elaborated with the teams of faculty members (Jouannet, Montalva, Ponce and Von Borries, 2015), enabling—to date—eight academic units to include the methodology in their course curriculum, and allowed another seven to be in the process of evaluating its incorporation, developing competencies such as social engagement, training the faculty and appointing an academic unit manager responsible for developing the methodology and working with communities.



Moreover, a team of professionals devoted exclusively to the program was formed to provide training and pedagogical advice to faculty and assistants for the incorporation of the methodology in their courses, redesigning contents, adding service projects, designing new evaluations and reflection activities.

Together with the above, the team has designed several tools and material, such as the *Guide for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning* (Caire, M., González, M., Jouannet, C., Montalva, J., & Ponce, C., 2018), which has made it possible to further explore the methodology in a course; the *Guide for the Design and Implementation of a Service-Learning Course* (Burgos, A., Caire, M., González, M., Jouannet, C., Montalva, J. & Ponce, C., 2019), or the *Guide for Interdisciplinary Service-Learning* (Caire, M., Carrillo, P., Sepúlveda, J. & Silva, S., 2021). Apart from highlighting the methodology and sharing the contents they elaborated, the team has made all the materials available.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, during these years, the assessment of the effects of the methodology and the generation of knowledge have been promoted, with publications in journals and presentations in congresses, both at home and abroad, emphasizing the value of gathering evidence of the effects of the methodology.

There have also been a number of efforts to encourage faculty who implement SL, in some cases, with recognition of their academic load and their training in the methodology.

During this time, there has also been significant work to create and participate in the university's internal networks as well as in external ones, such as the *Universidad Construye País* (University Builds Country) Network, the Ibero-American Service-Learning Network, the Tallories Network, the ODUICAL Network, and the National Service-Learning Network (REASE), among others. There has also been training for the incorporation of the methodology, and internships for members of national and international institutions. These spaces for work and cooperation have gained ground within a framework that is consistent with the program's objectives since, as long as knowledge and experiences are shared, the main beneficiaries will be the students who train in our institutions and the communities associated with the university.

The latest initiative has been the work carried out with the *Uniservitate* Project, which, as a result of the maturity and sustainability of the Service-Learning Program, seeks to generate changes in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs) through service-learning institutionalization, as a tool to achieve integral training of graduates and to respond to the challenges of our time.

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17 <https://desarrollodocente.uc.cl/programas/aprendizaje-servicio/>

*His understanding of the methodology, his engagement, actions and reflection have been crucial to legitimize SL as an essential pillar in the education of students and a real, quality approach to working with the communities.*

Many of these significant actions and landmarks were not automatically achieved, and there are a number of factors that influenced the way in which this kind of policy was adopted. In the case of the UC, several of the initial actions were accomplished thanks to the involvement

and the proactive participation of the authorities, especially President Rosso between 2000 and 2010. His understanding of the methodology, his engagement, actions and reflection have been crucial to legitimize SL as an essential pillar in the education of students and a real, quality approach to working with the communities.

To illustrate it, Zulueta and Reutter (2006) refer to it in the following way: *“The fifth lesson learned is the importance of the support of the authorities to achieve an impact and legitimization within the university community. In the case of the UC, President Pedro Pablo Rosso has been the main advocate of the development of this methodology, embracing the faculty’s proposals, assigning goals for the General Student Office to explore, together with a budget to create the center, and becoming involved in various projects and activities of the SL at UC program.”*

## Interview

*Interviewer: The history of Service-Learning begins when a team of professors from different schools took an interest in implementing this initiative after learning about it abroad. What struck your attention about service-learning when this team of professors first introduced the idea?*

—I can remember it very clearly. Along with presenting me with the idea of organizing service-learning courses, I was provided with literature on the subject, which included some of the work published by Andrew Furco. In one of these publications he stated that his primary motivation to create this range of service-learning courses was the challenge of freeing young people from the trap of individualism in contemporary culture. Furco said: “They attend university to learn a profession that will enable them to earn a good income and thereby support a personal project. How can we open a window for them towards solidarity and concern for the well-being of others?” That objective was in line with the

*Furco said: “They attend university to learn a profession that will enable them to earn a good income and thereby support a personal project. How can we open a window for them towards solidarity and concern for the well-being of others?” That objective was in line with the desire I had to read the Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae.*

service to individuals and society” (ECE, n. 49). His concern for a university education with a proposal rooted in values of solidarity also found an echo in the Holy Father’s speeches to university communities during his numerous pastoral visits. I was particularly inspired by the words he pronounced at the University of Turin, during his encounter with representatives of the world of culture. On that occasion, he stated: “Society demands from the university not only specialists, versed in their specific fields of knowledge, culture, science and technology, but above all, builders of humanity, servants of the community of brothers and sisters, advocates of justice because they are oriented towards the truth”. (Pope

*Consequently, upon assuming the presidency, I was eager to create an educational project with a proposal of values that would encourage our students to engage in a personal commitment with the common good.*

*Interviewer: Definitely. And, in addition to what you are saying—because there is this training that you believe is so necessary for our graduates, it is so crucial for them to leave the classroom and also leave this capsule, this individualism, guided by the value of our Catholic Church—was there anything in the country, in those days, that was happening that would require more socially engaged professionals? It is about 2004 that we are talking about, isn’t it? I do not remember clearly.*

desire I had to read the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. In it, John Paul II called on Catholic universities to pursue an education “that trains people who are capable of rational and critical judgment, and conscious of the transcendent dignity of the human person; a professional education that incorporates ethical values and a sense of

John Paul II, Turin 1988, n. 4) Consequently, upon assuming the presidency, I was eager to create an educational project with a proposal of values that would encourage our students to engage in a personal commitment with the common good.

—During 2004 the new General Education Plan was launched, which fostered curricular flexibility and interdisciplinary studies. I reaffirm that the inspiration for this plan came from the words and spirit of the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. In this regard, I would like to quote another excerpt from *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*: “The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular significance for each Catholic university and should be shared by its faculty and encouraged among its students” (ECE. n. 34). There is nothing more explicit in favor of the development of an academic offering of service-learning courses... In those years—and I have not changed my mind—I was under the impression that our country was dominated by the culture of individualist meritocracy, in which “everyone fends for oneself”. I often heard people say: “The poor are poor because they are lazy”.

In addition, I was particularly concerned when I talked to the students entering University and their families, I would ask practically all of them the same question: “Why did you want to study at the Catholic University? Are you a Catholic, what is your motivation?” And in the vast majority of the cases their motivation was the same: because it is a highly prestigious university. Hence: it is the ideal springboard for a brilliant professional career.

*Interviewer: What you say is really interesting as it is a different vision, isn't it? It is like being fully in charge, because—as you say—Ex Corde Ecclesiae is very challenging in that sense; its invitation certainly is. In that respect, why did you opt for a service-learning program that first developed at the Office of Students Affairs and then moved to the Center for Teaching Development? What made you take that decision?*

*Its transformation into a Program, was a form of safeguarding it, of not losing it and—at the same time—of conferring it academic legitimacy, which meant that we would assess it to determine if it complied with its theoretical objectives; we could improve it, validate it by means of empirical comparisons or discard it if it proved to be unrealistic.*

—Considering the culture of our university, the worst thing that can happen to an initiative is to have only one champion, that is, the person who keeps the Chinese plates spinning while they are there. If this person leaves, all the plates will fall. Conversely, if an initiative is institutionalized, its maintenance becomes part of the Senior Management's policies, thus ensuring budget and continuity. It seemed to me that the concept of service-learning was so valuable and consistent with the educational project we were embarking on that we had to guarantee its vitality and permanence. And, lastly,

because it was so easy to carry out. All we needed was the will to create it, the readiness of some of our professors and the application of a certain methodology. As I was telling you, its institutionalization, that is, its transformation into a Program, was a form of safeguarding it, of not losing it and—at the same time—of conferring it academic legitimacy, which meant that we would assess it to determine if it complied with its theoretical objectives; we could improve it, validate it by means of empirical comparisons or discard it if it proved to be unrealistic.

*Interviewer: I believe that everything you have just said is crucial and that you took important decisions. First, you created a program, you placed it within the Office of Student Affairs, and in 2006 you moved it to the Center for Teaching Development, to the Academic Vice-President's Office, with a more pedagogical, curricular approach. Why did you deem it necessary to boost it in this way?*

—When I confirmed, thanks to the testimonies I received, that the service-learning project was producing the desired result, I considered that it was the right time to “institutionalize it” and assign it the category of Program. After discussing the issue with the Board of Directors (my work team), we concluded that the new Center for Teaching Development was the ideal environment for the technical capacity, willingness to change and loyalty to the UC principles of the people who worked there. Time has proven us right. It was of great interest to us that faculty who wanted to participate in the program should be adequately trained and accompanied there.

*Interviewer: You underscore the importance of accompanying faculty and you created a model for faculty accompaniment here—they are not left alone.*

—Of course. That was something I learned during my long stay in the United States. In American universities one of the responsibilities a leader has is to attend to the personal and professional development of the members of their schools, departments or institutes. When I returned to Chile, I was struck by the lack of importance given to that aspect. It was a “Darwinian” situation of academic survival. As dean of the School of Medicine, and later on as president, I strove to change that culture. I believe we have made some progress.

*Service-learning seeks to be a school of alterity, of service to others, and—if there is an essential feature of Christianity, it is alterity—to reach out to the community of brothers and sisters, to find Christ in others, not only in those who suffer, but also in those who are joyful, in that person who helps you in an unknown neighborhood, in that friend who asks you to lunch.*

*Interviewer: Going back to something you mentioned earlier, as you see it, how is service-learning linked to our Christian spirituality?*

—Service-learning seeks to be a school of alterity, of service to others, and—if there is an essential feature of Christianity, it is alterity—to reach out to the community of brothers and sisters, to find Christ in others, not only in those who suffer, but also in those who are joyful, in that person who helps you in an unknown neighborhood, in that friend who asks you to lunch...

That is essential. I also believe that this is what is natural, what is properly human. I understand that what characterizes human beings is not their rational capacity because most animals can reason. But they lack the capacity of self-giving, of loving unconditionally. This is what Saint John Paul II called “vocation to love” (John Paul II, 1979, n. 10).

*Living the experience of serving and feeling the gratification that it brings about helps people “humanize”, grow as persons.*

And, therefore, living the experience of serving and feeling the gratification that it brings about helps people “humanize”, grow as persons.

This reminds me of a very beautiful concept. Something I learned from reading one of the lesser-known Christian humanists, a great philosopher: Gabriel Marcel. Marcel speaks of the person’s being and having. John Paul II uses this concept brilliantly in a remarkable speech at UNESCO. On that occasion, the Pope spoke of culture, of human beings born and made in a culture. I will quote his words: “Culture is that through which man as man, becomes more of a man, ‘is’ more, has more access to ‘being’. Here lies the capital distinction between what man is and what he has, between being and having. Culture is always in an essential and necessary relationship to what man is, whereas its relationship to what he has, to his ‘having’, is not only secondary, but entirely relative. The whole ‘having’ of

*This is the tension that Catholic universities must face: the challenge of training good professionals, of course, providing them with the tools to earn a good living, that is, adding to having, but how can we make our students more human? As I see it, the core element of Christianity is this: alterity. To conceive my life project with others and for others.*

man is not important for culture, nor is it a factor that creates culture, except insofar as man, through his ‘having’, can at the same time ‘be’ more fully a man, become more fully a man in all the dimensions of his existence, in everything that characterizes his humanity”. (John Paul II, 1980 n. 7)

And the Holy Father concludes this statement by asserting that education must strive to make man more of a person, to add to his being more than to his having. This is the tension that Catholic universities must face: the challenge of training good professionals, of course, providing them with the tools to earn a good living, that is, adding to having, but how can we make our students more human? As I see it, the core element of Christianity is this: alterity. To conceive my life project with others and for others.

*Interviewer: In that respect, if you were to define service-learning, how would you do it?*

—I would say it is a proposal that reinforces the dimension of alterity which allows a person to be more of a person, and—I insist—for me, being more of a person means to be more open and warm, more concerned about the good of others and, therefore, the common good.

*Interviewer: That is important because nowadays all that values education, which is such an integral part of our human condition, as you say, can remain, at times, in the background. Going over the early days of the program, there has been, since then, a focus on working with other internal units and with other institutions. Construye País (Builds Country), national and international networks. In that sense: Why did you deem it so important to share it with other institutions?*

—Because I thought we had something very valuable that had to be shared, promoted, something that was good for the country. Above all, considering that the leaders of tomorrow are educated in universities.

*It is imperative not to waste their time at university and to do our best to guide them properly towards the common good, solidarity, justice.*

Hence, it is imperative not to waste their time at university and to do our best to guide them properly towards the common good, solidarity, justice.

*Interviewer: What features of your leadership do you think have influenced the growth of service-learning, the fact that today it covers almost the entire university, that it is a program with five professionals, with a great number of students, in which we are educating professors from the Catholic University of Ecuador, Pernambuco, Xavierian of Bogotá and the Catholic University of Córdoba, and so many other things, participating in national and international networks?*



—I suppose the majority of Latin American academics hold a good opinion of our university; at least in the Catholic higher education world it is regarded as a paradigmatic institution. Therefore, I believe that, upon learning that the president of the UC was promoting service-learning, they must have thought it was an interesting initiative to explore. That is my hypothesis.

*Interviewer: In your opinion, what characteristics did this initiative have that enabled it to be institutionalized?*

—I think you know me well enough to see that, when I was reasonably convinced that an initiative was important for our University, I would do everything in my power to implement it. I never stopped to question whether it was “politically correct”—there were many times I had to go against the tide of resistance to change. But it is the only way to exercise a transformational leadership. I hope I do not sound complacent if I say that during our administration, as regards commitment to its values and principles, capacity for innovation and academic excellence, the UC stepped fully into the 21st century.

*Interviewer: One last question. What was your dream for service-learning when you were president of the university? Do you consider it has been achieved?*

*Service-learning is a project that has developed deep roots and flourished. Today, nobody would ask what it is for. It is valued by students, embraced with enthusiasm and soulfulness by the faculty, an initiative that many fall in love with.*

*Doubtlessly, I feel this is a dream fulfilled, in all its dimensions. And, above all, because we succeeded in promoting it, disseminating it, introducing it into so many places and we managed to see it flourish in a great number of institutions.*

—My hopes and dreams have been fulfilled to a very large extent. Service-learning is a project that has developed deep roots and flourished. Today, nobody would ask what it is for. It is valued by students, embraced with enthusiasm and soulfulness by the faculty, an initiative that many fall in love with. These are all experiences that you know well, that you have lived because you were and are the soul of this great project. Doubtlessly, I feel this is a dream fulfilled, in all its dimensions. And, above

all, because we succeeded in promoting it, disseminating it, introducing it into so many places and we managed to see it flourish in a great number of institutions.



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In support of the Global Compact on Education

*Uniservitate* is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. Its objective is to generate a systemic change in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs) through the institutionalisation of service-learning (SL) as a tool to achieve its mission of offering an integral education and training of agents of change committed to their community.

**“We will not change the world, if we do not change education”**

*Pope Francis*

## 4 Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education

This work aims to discover and highlight all the wealth within the perspectives of the different actors participating in the institutionalization processes of service-learning in Higher Education. Through the description of various global cases of service-learning institutionalization, the book presents reflections, actions and experiences that outline conceptual elements and key features, seeking to contribute to the great global debate on how and to which purpose processes allowing for the integration of service-learning into the identity and culture of Higher Education institutions are launched and developed.

We introduce this fourth volume of the Uniservitate collection with the firm intention of allowing readers to experience, through its pages, a journey across the different continents and cultures, exploring stories as diverse as the contexts and actors behind them, and to take on the challenges and dreams that we believe the book suggests, with a forward-looking approach, for those interested in a Higher Education that is more engaged with the world in which it unfolds its actions.

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

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