Proposal of the Public and Community Higher Education Institutions of Brazil signatories to the *3rd World Higher Education Conference*

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National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education - ANDIFES
National Council of Institutions of the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific
and Technological Education - CONIF
Brazilian Association of State and Municipal Universities - ABRUEM
Brazilian Association of Community Universities - ABRUC

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One must hope, but hope from the Portuguese verb to hope ("esperançar");
for there are people who derive hope from the verb to wait ("esperar"). And hope from
the verb esperar is not hope, it is waiting. To hope is to rise, to hope is to pursue one's
dreams, to hope is to build, to hope is to not give up! To hope is to carry on, to hope is
to join with others to do things differently.
FREIRE, Paulo

INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the the 3rd World Higher Education Conference (WHEC2022) promoted by UNESCO, to be held from the 18th to the 20th of May in the city of Barcelona, Spain, Higher Education in Brazil is experiencing yet another challenging period in the successive crises it has gone through in recent years. We are in an educational emergency, driven by limitations imposed on social policies, limitations that jeopardize the country's sustainable development. Constitutional Amendment 95, passed in 2016, which limits federal government spending to a ceiling for a period of 20 years, has become the main barrier to public sector investment. The amendment's negative consequences are now widely recognized, even by those who once supported its approval. In addition to the deleterious effects of the spending cap, the ideological and symbolic attacks on educational institutions in recent years have further diminished the little existing university autonomy, and exacerbated limitations on academic freedom with persecution of teachers critical of government policies in the areas of education, health and ST&I (science, technology and innovation). This has become the case for all state and community higher education, but especially for federal institutions of higher education. Budgetary constraints have reduced capital investments to practically zero, limiting our sustenance and making it impossible to expand federal HEIs (institutions of higher education); expenditures, also drastically reduced, have a severe impact on our ability to take on and keep on low-income students, making it almost impossible for them to continue their studies.

Public Higher Education in Brazil has a long history of struggles for autonomy, funding and provision of free education. It was only as recently as the Federal Constitution of 1998 in which didactic-scientific, administrative, and fiscal autonomy was finally codified in the form of law. Unfortunately, the constitutional precept was never fully complied with in any of its terms. Didactic-scientific autonomy is strongly limited by discretionary state regulations that prevent HEIs from developing their own

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1 FREIRE, Paulo. Pedagogia dos sonhos possíveis. ("Pedagogy of possible dreams.") São Paulo, Editora UNESP, 2001.

teaching and research models. Administrative autonomy is disrespected in democratic management, people management and governance. Autonomy in financial and asset management is practically non-existent in federal institutions, making them dependent on uncertain annual budgets – budgets in which they have less and less participation in the setting of priorities and values, still being subject to periodic cuts and freezes. Medium and long-term planning and a vision of the future, which are characteristic of HEIs, are greatly hampered by this limitation in autonomy.

In the community institutions, the lack of specific policies and the current crisis jeopardize a model that has rendered positive results in the regions in which they operate, creating a complementary and high-quality alternative to non-state public education.

State public institutions (municipal, state or federal) and community, non-state public and non-profit institutions represent segments of Brazilian higher education that seek to act in a complementary way. However, in Brazil, most university students are enrolled in private, for-profit institutions. These private institutions receive government incentives, in the form of tax breaks, to enroll low-income students through financial aid. To be sure, the public policy of student financing has contributed to a significant increase in access to Higher Education. On the other hand, despite having received important investments in years past, public federal institutions have not been able to maintain sufficient budgetary levels to support policies for expansion, inclusion and permanence of low-income, Afro-descendant, indigenous and special-needs students. Furthermore, the funding of private, for-profit educational institutions – with taxpayer-provided money – is questionable practice.

One of the fundamental principles of Higher Education is inclusion with quality and relevance. There can be no inclusion without the quality of Higher Education or without connection to the social, environmental, economic and cultural reality of the country. It is in this sense that the Federal Constitution, in its article 207, prescribes to universities the inseparability between teaching, research and service; to that end, public and community HEIs have an established record of academic quality. The high-quality professional training promoted by public and community HEIs, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, is recognized by Brazilian society and internationally. In addition, public and community HEIs are responsible for more than 95% of the country's academic and scientific output. Public and community higher education plays an important part in the sustainable development of the country, whether by training highly qualified personnel for the public and private sectors, or by academic, artistic, and cultural production, or even by interacting with society to promote development with social justice.

Public and community HEIs have a long history of interacting with different sectors of society. In particular, through inclusion policies and university outreach,

these initiatives reach marginalized segments, promote development opportunities, welcome community, cultural, and identity movements, and promote the growing participation of these representations in the university community and in society as a whole. These interactions strengthen the recognition of the public nature of Higher Education, as a human right and a duty of the State. Through university outreach and engagement, there is still potential to be explored, whether in the application of knowledge and technologies aimed at sustainable development, in the scholarly validation of peoples' knowledge, or in the promotion of SDGs in cooperation with governments and non-governmental entities. To promote inclusion with quality and pertinence, HEIs need to have as their mission the promotion of humanist ideals, and responsibility towards social justice, the environment, respect for diversity, equity; we must fight against all forms of prejudice and inequality. And we must safeguard the freedom to exercise contradiction and its importance in citizenship. To this end, it is essential that HEIs have policies for the development of their teaching, technical-scientific and administrative staff, respecting their dedication to teaching, research, outreach and innovation with fair remuneration.

The signatories of this document, in representing public and community Higher Education in Brazil, assume basic principles and social and human values that consider Higher Education a universal human right, a social public good, and a duty of the States. At the 3rd Regional Conference on Higher Education, held in 2018 (Córdoba, Argentina), a document was presented that defended university autonomy, academic freedom, educational inclusion, the promotion of diversity and the rejection of any ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic prejudice.

This document is based on a vision of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, taking as its main reference the results of the Regional Conferences, in particular those of CRES-2018. CRES-2018, which brought together 5,000 people, upheld the Latin American and Caribbean tradition of plural and democratic participation. The significance of CRES-2018 is twofold. First of all, it was carried out within the framework of the celebrations of the centenary of the Reform of Córdoba, a regional and global landmark in the defense of university autonomy, academic freedom and interaction with society through inclusion and pertinence – bases that, to this day, underpin the principles of what we understand to be essential for a university. Second, CRES-2018 and its 1996 (Havana, Cuba) and in 2008 (Cartagena de Indias, Colombia) predecessors were initiatives that generated contributions of magnitude to the respective World Higher Education Conferences.

One must not lose sight of the importance, significance and representativeness of the CRES-2018 results. Therefore, the results obtained, present in its final declaration and detailed in its Action Plan, should serve as a basis for discussions on the theme proposed by UNESCO for the 3rd World Higher Education Conference (WHEC 2022).

WHEC 2022 is a unique opportunity to reflect and propose public policies aimed at the effective participation of public and community HEIs in sustainable development, doing so in multiple ways in each of the 17 SDGs proposed by the UN. Brazilian public and community HEIs, consistent with their history of social commitment, partner with governments and national and international institutions in achieving these goals, with the understanding that responsibilities must be borne by all. In this way, they reaffirm as basic foundations and principles ratified by CRES-2018 in its Final Declaration:

"Higher education is a social public good, a human and universal right, and a duty of States. These principles are grounded in the deep conviction that access, use and democratization of knowledge is a social, collective and strategic good, essential to be able to guarantee the basic and indispensable human rights for the well-being of our peoples, the construction of full citizenship, social emancipation and Latin American and Caribbean regional integration in solidarity."

Thus, public and community Higher Education in Brazil, represented here, offers the following fundamental elements for each of the themes, for due consideration by the 3rd World Higher Education Conference:

THEME 1 - Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education

The pandemic represents a tragedy for human society in which, once again, socioeconomic inequalities impacted the prevalence of the disease and limited access to prevention and treatment. In Brazil, the Unified Health System (known as SUS) faced a situation of millions of infected people and over 670,000 deaths in a context of denialism, omission and disrespect worsened by the lack of commitment on the part of the government. Despite this dire picture, and thanks to SUS teams, the health agency was able to mobilize its entire structure, from primary care to the most complex scenarios, striving towards effective prevention and treatment of COVID-19. The demonstrated success of vaccination coverage has once again evinced the renowned organization of SUS when it comes to primary care. Throughout this process, Higher Education – and especially public institutions committed to fighting the pandemic – mobilized their human, assistance and infrastructure resources, developed research, technologies and essential innovations to face COVID-19. University hospitals in Brazil are at the forefront of clinical care, and will also be leading the way in the rehabilitation of patients with COVID-19 sequelae.

Without a doubt, COVID-19 has had a profound impact on all HEI activities. The suspension of in-person teaching activities gave rise to the rapid assimilation of emergency forms of remote instruction. There is no doubt that these advances will

leave lasting effects on the way we teach, research and engage with society, bringing both benefits and risks. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of existing ICTs (information and communication technologies), but it is clear that they cannot substitute for face-to-face teaching for several reasons, not least of which are opportunities that the collective experience offers in terms of critical thinking, solidarity, and civic development -- not to mention the establishment of socio-affective bonds. Significant numbers of students did not have access (for example, to an internet connection) and remain without access – or reliable access – owing to the grave situation of digital inequity in the country. Even university faculty and staff had difficulties performing their functions remotely. In order to preserve, for future generations, any recent gains made in terms of virtual education, it is essential that digital inclusion be a right added to the right to education, and equally a duty of the State.

The functioning of HEIs has undergone profound changes. The administration of HEIs, the inter-institutional academic relationship, the exchange of information, new partnerships between researchers – all benefited significantly from the implementation of remote activities insofar as they made several activities possible. Scientific engagement with society is one of the areas in which HEIs have taken advantage of a unique opportunity to overcome their historical difficulties. With the pandemic came a recognition of the strategic role of HEIs. Communication channels were created where there were none, or few, before. A negative trend was reversed, with HEIs increasingly viewed as a heritage of society.

The role of Brazilian public HEIs in confronting the pandemic highlighted the need for an expanding public system capable of making a difference to society. The pandemic also represents an opportunity to develop transdisciplinary models to replace the disciplinary strictures, in which students have the opportunity to acquire their knowledge immersed in real-life problems and pressing needs in society. The pandemic is an example of a transdisciplinary situation that involves training, not only in the health disciplines, but also in the areas of humanities, technology and management. Other illustrative examples include sustainable development, the areas of artificial intelligence, information and communication technology, and wellness.

Social, cultural, artistic relationships, traditional knowledge of native peoples and identity groups are part of a new civilizational universe that opposes purely market-driven models that put the health and well-being of societies at risk. The post-pandemic period should not be planned to return to a so-called "new normal," but rather as a form of reflection on the future of humanity. The challenges facing universities now were there before the pandemic. Issues of funding, autonomy and democracy are not new; what has been heightened is the awareness of the university as central to the sustainable future of the nation.

- Adopt compensatory and recovery policies for the adverse effects of the health emergency on student dropout and retention.
- Promote regional cooperation between governments, companies, universities and research institutes for the development of vaccines and medicines aimed at the population as a whole and sectors with elevated epidemiological risk.
- Ensure digital inclusion as an essential element integral to the right to education, and a duty of the State.
- Incorporate new educational structures focused on transdisciplinary models, in which students have the opportunity to acquire their knowledge in the context of problems and needs present in society.
- Implement a policy for the sustained training of university workers in the use of new teaching-learning and learning management tools.
- Improve the incorporation of ICTs in university teaching, research, service and management processes, without prejudice to in-person activities and their indispensable role in higher education.

THEME 2 - Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 2030 Agenda and the accompanying SDGs are part of an effort that the UN is making to commit associated governments and organized society to a sustainable development model, based on important premises.

There can be no doubt that the climate and environmental crisis jeopardizes Earth's habitability, food production, water and air quality, among other critical elements. These effects are directly related to the way of life that human societies have pursued: A predatory, uneven development model that is incompatible with the necessary balance between the system's ability to recover and progressive aggression. Unfortunately, there is a growing imbalance towards the progressive loss of sustainability of life on the planet. In 2019, according to the Global Footprint Network, we have reached the point where we consume more than we replenish in terms of non-renewable resources. This means that from now on all resources used for survival (water, mining, oil extraction, animal consumption, soil depleting food crops, among others) will go into a kind of "negative credit." Despite the efforts that the UN and some governments have made in successive meetings in defense of the environment and accountability for measures to mitigate the

increasingly evident effects, there is a nefarious game of assigning individual solutions when, in fact, it is a question of a global and collective solution in which the main challenge is to get out of a consumerist model that exacerbates socioeconomic inequities.

It is noteworthy that an important dimension of the ongoing process of environmental degradation consists of the intense and continuous aggression against Brazilian indigenous populations, who historically have protected the territories they inhabit. Many of these peoples today are victims of armed invasion, murder, devastation of forests, contamination of rivers from illegal mining, and threats to public health – and all often with the consent and/or connivance of government entities.

He 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are aimed especially at governments, since they are the ones that propose and implement public policies and projects that directly or indirectly affect the whole of society. The extent to which each government has engaged in the development of the objectives varies widely, not only because of economics, but – and perhaps mainly – because of political decisions that bear different degrees of change in the models of national development. In this sense, it is clear that prioritization of outmoded developmental models from the last century, based on industrial and military investment, is fundamentally incompatible with SDGs. Even so, several countries have already incorporated the SDGs into their development plans, making new areas grow, such as green economy, reduction in reliance on fossil fuels, and the quest for foods less dependent upon animal protein. Education is included in the 4th of the 17 SDGs, including Higher Education. Goals and assessment criteria are defined for each of the levels. Ironically, the policies for financing education, especially higher education, are directed disproportionately towards private investment. The argument that governments lack resources for education is questionable when, in many cases, those same governments are subsidizing private institutions. Furthermore, changing a development model also implies changing priorities and, in this case, funding for education should be among the first priorities. When the 17 SDGs are analyzed, it is possible to identify those that most rely on education for their fulfillment, and particularly public and community Higher Education, which in Brazil is where most science and technology is produced. HEIs, socially-sanctioned institutions, can surely participate at all levels of sustainable development, whether through diagnosis, planning, preparation of qualified personnel, or the development of adequate instruments for application and evaluation of results. And this is already happening in many cases, considering that many HEIs already internally develop their institutional development plans based on the SDGs and have received support and recognition from their communities. It takes determination and commitment on the part of governments to adopt the SDGs as guidelines for their national development model, and to establish instruments that allow HEIs to assume their roles in the process.

A close look at the SDGs reveals that some of the goals are of national importance

and depend on government-level decisions for their implementation. In this sense, they embody our great economic, social and environmental challenges and, therefore, require a transformation of the financial, economic and political systems that govern society to ensure respect for human rights. They thus demand great political will to effect grand political action.

In addition, it is important to mention that some SDGs depend on joint action among regional governments and other parts of the world – this is the case for forests, water, seas and air. A government committed to the SDGs should maintain its funding sources, rather than withdrawing funds and developing policies of environmental de-regulation. It is necessary to resume and reaffirm that commitment to funding.

Public and community HEIs in Brazil have promoted, to the extent that it is within their reach, initiatives to link the SDGs to institutional objectives. They have planned and implemented several academic policies – teaching, research and working with com-munities – and management policies that contribute to sustainable development.

What is necessary and urgent is the unconditional commitment of Governments at all levels, the hegemonic economic sectors and society as a whole in saving our planet. Now more than ever, an African aphorism of unknown origin indicates the weight we bear: "We do not inherit the world from our parents; we borrow it from our children."

Proposals:

- The Brazilian Government must fully commit to the 2030 Agenda, establishing con-crete actions for each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a priority in the National Development Plans.
- Governments should seek the adherence to the SDGs from the broadest sectors of society, offering incentives, means, and support to do so.
- Governments should join international initiatives aimed at implementing the SDGs.
- Higher education must be committed, in its entirety, to the implementation of the SDGs.
- Research funding bodies should direct their funding programs aligned with the SDGs.
- Higher Education must incorporate the SDGs in their Institutional Development Plans, making them references for the professionals they train.
- Higher Education must offer professional training that enables the planning, execu-tion, and evaluation of the SDGs.
- Governments must protect native populations against current aggression, guarantee the integrity of their territories, the health of their members and their access to pub-lic higher education, with respect and appreciation of their traditional knowledge, which contributes to sustainable use of natural resources.

THEME 03 - Inclusion in Higher Education:

The CRES 2018 Declaration points to the need for higher education institutions to proactively contribute to dismantling the mechanisms that generate racism, xenophobia, sexism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination. Over the past several years, it has been the institutions of higher education that, in response to society's movements, have made advances in the fight against all forms of discrimination and in the promotion of respect for human rights. But it is necessary to move towards models of higher education that are even more inclusive and respectful of differences, attentive to the effective participation of all social actors, so that the knowledge and cultural values arising from these subjects are included in a vision of the future of humanity – no longer as excluded, but as people with legitimacy to share and participate in the spaces built in a modern social framework.

Respecting and valuing new social actors implies recognizing in higher education institutions a place for the formation of citizenship, which presupposes the participation of all on equal terms. It means offering conditions for permanence through educational policies that guarantee inclusion with quality, the diversity of all those involved, and respect for interculturality. Incorporating popular knowledge into university practices must move beyond intellectual exercise and become institutional practice, generating social recognition of the important role played by higher education institutions.

The future will only deliver more promising times if we know how to build higher education institutions based on civilizing and democratic foundations, deeply respectful of the existence of the other, of other subjects, other knowledge, other experiences, other perspectives less centered on individuality and more sympathetic to the collective.

Almost ten years after the implementation of the first affirmative action policies in Brazilian universities, there is still no systematic assessment of these measures. With the approval of Law no. 12.711 on August 29, 2012, which created a policy for reserving places for public school students, people of color and indigenous people throughout the federal higher education and high school system, the promise of significant affirmative action policy in Brazil seemed to be headed towards reality. However, Brazilian higher education requires that we move forward with such programs considering the sustainability of those admitted through such programs, to respect the cultural diversity of each group. This will only be possible with effective government actions. To this end, governments must urgently implement, according to the regional realities of their universities, affirmative action programs of both admission and retention, and spaces that welcome cultural diversity.

It is imperative that higher education remain vigilant so that inequality is not deepened, accepting that in order to maintain our identity as a nation, the subordination of one over the other is reinforced. The arrival of indigenous people, people of African descent, and people in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability in universities has an important role in the democratization of higher education and should be the object of State policies. It is imperative that higher education be unafraid to be proactive in presenting alternatives of solidarity and responsibility when facing the challenges of

🔆 Proposals:

- HEIs should include transdisciplinary courses/seminars in all programs that allow free debate among students on these topics, to proactively contribute to dismantling the mechanisms that generate racism, xenophobia, sexism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination.
- HEIs must demand that the State create student financing/investment policies that guarantee student retention and completion of courses, especially for at-risk students from public and community HEIs.
- HEIs should recognize and incorporate knowledge coming from popular knowledge by encouraging broader population by the community through outreach.
- HEIs should encourage practices conducive to well-being through the development of collective activities and new training paths.
- HEIs should assess the impacts of the implementation of affirmative action programs to approach such initiatives more systematically.

THEME 4 - Quality and Relevance of Programs.

Higher education in Brazil is undergoing a strong expansion in this century. To some degree, this expansion is associated with the sizable investments made between 2007-2015 in the federal higher education network, either by creating federal institutes or by increasing the number of universities and campuses. In particular, the Quotas Law, which promoted the inclusion of segments of society previously excluded from university education, has caused significant changes in the makeup of the academic community both by socioeconomically vulnerable students as well as Afro-descendants and Indians, providing for a more democratic Higher Education culture. In the community HEI sector, the pandemic has accelerated challenges of the very sustainability of these institutions, with economic pressures drastically reducing the number of students and student financing mechanisms. On the other hand, the great expansion in higher education institutions and

in the number of students enrolled occurred especially among private, for-profit universities. With the pandemic and the need to suspend in-person activities, distance learning – already on the rise before the pandemic – grew especially fast in private institutions, such that, currently, almost half of all remote education is carried out in that sector.

In this scenario, the quality assurance of programs becomes a challenge to be faced as a priority. Teaching quality assessment, both at undergraduate and graduate levels, has a long history, both in the establishment of official standards and assessment structures under government responsibility, as well as independent public bodies for authorization, regulation and evaluation of programs, with the National Education Council being the main body. This system is the collective result of involvement from the higher education community, associations, unions and organizations representing society and the university community as a whole. The growing presence of private for-profit education has undeniably put pressure on such entrenched systems, both in the sense of relaxing the norms that define quality standards, and in the sense of evaluative control over the fulfillment of requirements. In the current state of affairs, in which government policies and part of the National Congress seek to diminish the importance of public higher education, especially universities, and, at the same time, question the obligation of public funding and press for alternative ways to overcome free tuition in federal institutions of higher education, the issue of quality assurance and relevance of the programs becomes even more sensitive. Therefore, the defense of current institutions for evaluating public and community HEIs is a priority for higher education in the country. Naturally, improving processes, increasing their effectiveness, transparency, and participation in them from society must be the foundation for this defense.

The changes observed in higher education in terms of its expansion and inclusion determine that the quality assurance of programs is related to relevance and inclusiveness. There can be no real expansion and inclusion without guaranteeing the quality of programs. Education avails itself of concepts borrowed from the field of economics, such as efficiency, productivity, cost-effectiveness, response to the demands of the world of work, employability, student numbers, scientific production, etc. Although quantitative evaluations of higher education programs are important in terms of governance, transparency and accountability to society, the fact that quality must be directly linked to the social relevance and scientific relevance of programs cannot be overlooked.

Relevance is characterized by the commitment of higher education to the demands of its surrounding communities and the nation. Relevance can be thus seen as a two-way process between HEIs and society, with the aim of pursuing sustainable development, equity and social justice. Relevance is not just about offering programs, but a complete commitment to the multiple aspects of society. It is necessary to guarantee greater social

justice in the access and continuity of studies for all, especially for the most vulnerable sectors of society, providing quality education. By the same token, the full participation in the productive system by the most at-risk portions of our society is, increasingly, a condition for overall economic and social development.

University outreach programs play a key role in promoting relevance. In this sense, the inclusion of community engagement initiatives (e.g. service learning) in undergraduate programs is a fundamental step. There are other aspects still to be ensured such as ensuring that evaluations translate into continuous improvement of substantive functions; generating and socially exploiting knowledge and innovations; promoting internationalization in educational processes; and achieving more effective support management.

Likewise, it is important to address national and international rankings here: although they bring evaluation and ranking criteria that are different from each other, they bear relevance when assessing the quality of education. Generally speaking, universities are evaluated on the basis of their output (training and research results), the quality of their staff, and their ability to manage funding, which translates into intellectual and financial quality and the quality of their "customers," i.e. the students. In other words, in this great "market" of education, the rankings draw a cartography of education in its various forms, impacting both personal and political decision-making. It is important to note here that rankings do not bring a solution to the Brazilian university; however, they shed light on ways forward, provide a good vision of overall performance, and help universities to re-envision themselves with a view to world recognition. Nevertheless, public policies for Higher Education must include, as a priority, the viability of teaching, research, and service as instruments for the development of its community and the country as a whole in harmony with regional and international institutions. The construction of global quality assessment systems must necessarily take into account the particularities of each region and country, something that is still a challenge for existing ranking systems.

A brief reflection on teacher education is called for here. At the last Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES), held in 2018 in Córdoba, Argentina, this matter was treated with the utmost seriousness. The connection of higher education with K-12 education (elementary and secondary) is increasingly essential in order to eliminate the current gap between the different levels. It is necessary to review this relationship, whether from the point of view of higher education institutions that do not effectively fulfill their commitment, or the public policies that devalue the teaching profession, ignore its centrality, and precariously and unfairly reward educational performance. It is therefore necessary to define quality criteria, establishing appropriate indicators for the purposes of teacher education, focusing on values of inclusion, diversity, and relevance. It is up to government bodies to develop policies and mechanisms that promote quality and provide clear support to institutions so that they adopt a commitment to advancing teacher development

in a responsible and culturally-responsive manner. What is advocated here is that any assessment of quality in programs of Higher Education clearly and purposefully take into account the guarantee of training opportunities for everyone, starting with the continuous teacher development.

The traditional disciplinary strictures underlying undergraduate and graduate studies must be gradually replaced by interdisciplinary models in which students have the opportunity to acquire their knowledge immersed in the problems and needs present in society. The environment, the climate crisis – itself capable of bringing new pandemics – the challenges of both rural urban realities, must be addressed as central themes in professional training. Indigenous peoples and identity groups that are part of a new civilizational universe that opposes consumption models, considered by some as a risk factor to the health and well-being of society, must be listened to and given the chance to study, to build their citizenship, to emancipate themselves socially. In other words, it is about establishing dialogues of knowledge: intercultural dialogues, plural and inclusive dialogues.

Proposals:

- Ensure the evaluation of the quality of programs based on criteria wherein relevance is essential.
- Ensure that the expansion and inclusion of programs is accompanied by quality and relevance criteria that meet the regulatory frameworks.
- Ensure the functioning of public bodies responsible for program quality assessment at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Ensure program evaluations that are consistent with sustainable development objectives.
- Seek regional and international interaction in assessment systems in order to promote desirable inter-institutional exchanges.
- Prioritize teacher education programs that respect quality criteria consistent with local and national needs.
- Promote new interdisciplinary training initiatives with the establishment of dialogue: dialogue among different fonts of knowledge, intercultural dialogues, plural and inclusive dialogues.

THEME 05 - *Academic Mobility in Higher Education:*

A partir das experiências brasileiras de programas de mobilidade acadêmi-

ca (MABased on the Brazilian experience of academic mobility programs (MARCA, PDSE, Ciência Sem Fronteiras, CAPES PRINT, among other examples from the last decade), there is a consensus that academic mobility must be the fruit and tool of an internationalization policy that drives the objectives behind the international experience offered to students, teachers and managers of higher education institutions.

In line with the regional understanding of Higher Education, the Brazilian university is fundamentally rooted in local society. Its quality is measured by the relevance of its training, its research, and its sociocultural interactions. Therefore, the internationalization process and the resulting mobility - mobility of ideas, people, diplomas, training processes - cannot be derived from global concepts that would be used, in a normative way, to promote practices originating solely from a select group of countries. Instead, internationalization policy must be based on diverse regional and sub-regional identities, trajectories, and histories, and pay essential attention to local needs and problems. Mobility should aim towards mutual understanding, the overcoming of differences, and the mutual enrichment of ideas through contact with others; not the experience of (and systematic adherence to) standards pre-judged as "best" within a "global campus" that would ignore diversity. A globalized concept of higher education should promote unity in diversity, not uniformity, and respect the quality standards insofar as they are relevant to each culture.

Another essential value associated with internationalization in Brazil is regional integration, which involves the experience of socio-cultural exchange among different peoples and young minds. Mobility, particularly student mobility, must have this purpose, long before a mercantile understanding of higher education in which the student would be a mere consumer of internationalized services, encouraged to go to the best provider.

Mobility fundamentally involves the exchange of ideas and interactions between researchers. When it comes to research and training at the graduate level, Brazil is a major Latin American player and has a rich history of international academic partnerships. Much of the intra-regional and inter-regional mobility is driven by research projects of common interest: Amazonian biodiversity, biofuels and renewable energies, tropical diseases, smart cities, social problems in megalopolises, management of large water basins... Examples abound that for years have driven the creation of international academic networks to advance issues of transnational interest, which should increasingly guide academic mobility actions.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the historical importance of distance learning in Brazil, which has been used for decades as a way to overcome territorial asymmetries and expand access to higher education. The pandemic has dramatically increased the use of virtual means of education, and is still curtailed by the limited accessibility by segments of the population to technology (Internet access, availability of adequate

equipment, among other factors). Virtual mobility and other exchanges have become a reality, and the initial experience gained in the region can be used to improve and expand the practice, again based on the local relevance of the training offered.

Proposals:

- Design internationalization and solidarity cooperation programs, effective intra-regional academic mobility policies (teachers, students and administrative staff) and intergovernmental programs to strengthen integration within the scope of South-South cooperation. These programs should promote in-depth knowledge about regions, cultures, foreign and vernacular languages, with global connection through local instruction.
- Increase the commitment of regional governments to the establishment of public policies that promote solidarity internationalization among HEIs. In practice, this could occur through the establishment of regulatory frameworks that facilitate regional integration, intra-regional mobility, recognition of various training paths, diplomas, credits and qualifications, and equitable international research collaboration.
- Strengthen international academic cooperation initiatives and partnerships on topics of common interest, such as biodiversity, tropical diseases, renewable energies, etc.
- Deepen the international flavor of course curricula, to improve the retention and graduation rate of students and favor student mobility, in particular through internationalization activities at home (e.g. dual degrees, co-tutelle, virtual mobility and multilateral agreements for mutual course recognition).
- Ensure and promote multilingualism in academic activities to ensure an ecology of knowledge and world cultures.

THEME 06 - Governance in Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions have their own unique characteristics. Professional training at different levels of complexity and the production of knowledge define its nature and its relationship with society and governments. In this way, HEIs have evolved – and considerably so – in building a multi-way relationship involved with different interested parties. Once sometimes considered institutions divorced from the world around them, mainly serving their own interests, today universities engage more and at multiple levels – local, regional and international — and with a plurality of peo-

ple, organizations, governments and other HEIs through different forms of cooperation.

As part of their dynamic nature, institutional environments are increasingly required to involve input from these parties to shape institutional development policies, attract funding, and implement educational, scientific, social, economic, and cultural policies. As a result, HEIs must democratize their administrations at multiple levels, from those affecting their representative councils, to the administrative and management tiers.

In such a fashion, HEIs can align themselves with social movements that demand greater participation from different social strata in the interests of democracy and representativeness. It behooves HEIs to listen more to society's needs, allowing it to play a greater role in the planning and execution of planning and development, with greater transparency in its governance and broader democratic participation in internal and external audits. The challenge of a new kind of relationship therefore faces HEIs today, wherein access to information is ever greater, the will to have a say in bodies that are taxpayer funded is ever stronger, and the calls for greater diversity, democracy and transparency ever louder. There is no doubt that systems of governance also benefit from political, social and technological evolution, allowing HEIs to have a greater and better capacity to respond to current challenges, greater efficiency in their management and greater capacity to produce the information necessary for this interaction.

There is a basic and fundamental premise for developing contemporary forms of governance with greater interaction with society. University autonomy - vis-à-vis academic, administrative, financial, and asset management affairs - is an essential foundation for the governance practices that are now demanded of HEIs. Contrary to what might be inferred in the proposed provision for the topic, governance is a consequence of university autonomy, not the other way around. It cannot be said often enough that university autonomy, although constitutionally guaranteed in many countries, has not yet been guaranteed in a large number of countries. Unfortunately, successive governments ignore that public HEIs are State institutions. In the current condition, in which HEIs in Brazil survive on increasingly smaller and drip-distributed resources, talking of governance is bordering on fiction. Medium to long-term planning, and the vision of the future that characterizes HEIs, are significantly hindered by this limitation in autonomy. Public funding itself, which should be allocated to public state and community HEIs, subsidizes instead the predatory growth of for-profit institutions. Academic freedom runs up against the hermetic regulation in education, and administrative autonomy breaks down in terms of the way in which leaders are chosen, as well as disregard for attempts to plan institutional development. It is evident that without true autonomy, HEIs are tied to political vagaries that prevent the free exercise of their institutional nature. It is also clear from the above that autonomy does not mean

sovereignty and governance over the law. HEIs, as State institutions that can only live in symbiosis with society, must also rely on democracy, inclusion and transparency as their foundations of respect for legal frameworks.

💡 Proposals:

- Respect, on the part of Governments, university autonomy on all levels: academic, administrative, financial and asset management.
- Guarantee financial resources for public and community HEIs so as to allow for multi-year institutional planning.
- Expand the forms of democratic participation of representations of the internal and external community in academic, administrative, financial and asset management.
- Promote democratic, transparent and auditable management at all levels of university work.
- Implement technological resources in governance, making the system more efficient and more accessible.
- Implement internal and external control mechanisms with broad stakeholder participation.

THEME 07 - Financing in Higher Education

Universities are relatively recent institutions in Brazil, with the first ones appearing only at the beginning of the 20th century. Over time, public and private systems were structured, coexisting in their own spaces, with private HEIs competing for public resources in government programs. State public HEI institutions were linked to the federal, state and municipal spheres, the non-state public HEIs comprised the community institutions, whilst the private sector consisted chiefly of for-profit institutions.

By 2020, private HEIs hosted the largest number of undergraduate enrollments in the country, with 77.5% of the total; the number of private institutions is also the one that grew the most, representing in 2020 87.6% of the total number of HEIs.

Federal HEIs, consisting of Federal Universities and Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology, have their funding set in the Union budget, with amounts that vary according to government policy. State and municipal HEIs have different funding schemes, from percentages of state taxes, state-level budget allocation, or even a mix of public and private funding. N 2020, Federal and State Universities were responsible for 50.3% of all on-campus enrollments in universities, reaching all Brazilian states, including a significant inland expansion.

Federal HEIs have suffered from constant decreases in the volume and nature of

budgetary resources, making governance, management and institutional development planning extremely difficult. For the same reasons, policies for hiring teaching and non-teaching staff are entirely dependent on the policies of the government in power. To get an idea of the challenge this has presented, suffice it to say that at the Federal Universities, from 2013 to 2020, the resources associated with overhead and investments were reduced by 37.1% and 97.2%, respectively (considering constant values, at January 2021 prices, corrected by the Brazilian consumer price index, the IPCA). The salaries of faculty and staff have not been adjusted since 2017 and are already being eroded by inflation. Meanwhile, in the same 2013-2020 period, undergraduate enrollments increased by 12.5%, master's enrollments by 40.8% and doctoral enrollments by 47.7%.

In public higher education in Brazil, tuition-free education is provided for by the constitution and its defense is led by student representations, professional unions, and is furthermore supported by society. With the implementation of the Quota Law of 2012, in addition to being free of charge, student support has become central to the access and retention of students affected by the law, with a view to providing adequate conditions for students to successfully complete their undergraduate studies.

The competition for public resources within the executive branch itself is aggravated when government policies reduce these resources from the educational sector, as is the case today. This competition also includes private HEIs, with public resources often being dedicated to for-profit institutions. This is of course counter-intuitive: a for-profit organization by definition should be able to sustain itself.

The financing of public HEIs should be one of the basic foundations for the incorporation of higher education in the sustainable development of the country. The same should apply to all government funding of Science, Technology, Culture and Arts. The initiatives that since 2016 have been reducing the country's investment capacity in these areas transcend the argument of lack of resources to expose the fact that these reductions are part of a policy of reducing social policies and dismantling public HEIs. It is worth remembering that no country has ever overcome the challenges of development without massive government investment in Education, Science and Technology.

The growing lack of funding for public HEIs, together with the effects of the health crisis resulting from the pandemic caused by the Coronavirus-Sars-Cov-2, are jeopardizing the ability of public HEIs to maintain their levels of participation in the training of highly trained staff, generation of knowledge and competitive technology in the national and international markets. It is with great concern that we have witnessed the resulting loss of professionals trained domestically – with public resources – to better working conditions in other countries.

- Guarantee multi-annual budgetary resources that enable the implementation of Institutional Development Plans (IDPs).
- Ensure the hiring of personnel in accordance with the personnel development policy of the IDPs.
- Guarantee by law the budget for student assistance.
- Ensure investments in science, technology, innovation, arts and culture.
- Ensure government funding for public and community HEIs.
- Create a State funding policy that regulates and guarantees funding for public and community HEIs.

THEME 08 - Production of Data and Knowledge:

Reliable, transparent and easy-to-manage data are absolutely fundamental for scientific development, for the development of public policies, and for accountability to society. The production of data, for both internal (e.g. teaching, research and service) and external (e.g. government oversight) accounting purposes has been carried out by HEIs alone or in cooperation with other institutions. The production, wide reporting and analysis of data are fundamental for university management and monitoring of quality control by the bodies that oversee HEI operations. Although there are different sources of data on teaching and research at the national, regional and international levels, there is a lot of variability, little standardization, complexity in finding and/or using the data, and, even more worrying, an underutilization of the results to inform decisions around identifying priorities for spending where it may be most needed to overcome current challenges. It is also necessary to make an effort to adapt international indicators to the reality of Latin American HEIs, which have very different and heterogeneous profiles, with strong engagement with service, assistance and culture, just to mention a few examples.

In addition to the databases themselves, in-depth analysis of results, with artificial intelligence algorithms, remains a distant reality from the management of HEIs in Brazil and the surrounding region. We thus believe that continuous investment in this area – that of AI-assisted data analysis – should be a priority for governments, funding agencies and universities themselves, as their use represents an advance in the administrative efficiency of management and governance of HEIs, in addition to a commitment to transparency.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, HEIs are primarily responsible for research and, therefore, are the main sources of knowledge production. The production of knowledge is one of the fundamental pillars of HEIs and increasingly requires the open sharing of their projects, methods and results, using the so-called "open science." Despite occasional advances, the implementation of open science is still nascent in our region; it will eventually allow the emergence of synergies as well as a challenge to hegemonic powers in conflict with sustainable development that is accessible by all. A sustainable future depends on cooperation committed to the public good and social justice that promotes inclusion with ethics, equity, and quality assurance.

Proposals:

- Analyze the possibility of defining common guidelines for the accountability to society by HEIs.
- Establish best practices regarding information transparency and the adoption of open science mechanisms for the dissemination of publicly funded research results.
- Promote open data repositories.
- Support the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence as a data analysis tool.

THEME 09 - International cooperation to improve synergies:

CRES 2018 points out that "internationalization (...) favors the formation of citizens and professionals, respectful of cultural diversity, committed to intercultural understanding, the culture of peace and the ability to live and work in a local and global community" (Declaration from the 3rd Regional Conference on Higher Education for Latin America and the Caribbean). The Covid-19 pandemic, in the midst of tragedy, has also underscored the value of solidarity among peoples.

At the heart of this understanding of internationalization lies an explicit goal of international academic cooperation is regional integration. The strengthening of integration in Latin America by sharing historical realities and facing common challenges together are important tools for the expansion of knowledge and the coordination of joint actions that may favor regional development. In the region, and in Brazil in particular, international cooperation also serves to reinforce the relevance of integration among peoples from the perspective of cooperation on an equal level, to counteract the enormous differences between countries, and especially between the North and the South.

In this way, the goal of strengthening the existing spaces and networks of regional integration and South-South cooperation is seen as particularly relevant, with one of the most important being the Espacio Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Educación Superior - ENLACES, as a representative space for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Innovation also plays an essential role as a tool for international cooperation. Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean we have, in recent decades, seen research development that has not been reflected as it should in innovation and the resulting impact on the sustainable social and economic development of the region as a whole. Innovation, the main factor of development in the 21st century, is anchored in research, from basic to applied research. Innovation, in this sense, is an expression of research. Thus, in Latin America and the Caribbean, we have enormous potential yet to come to fruition, developing mechanisms and processes that can transform the knowledge generated in Universities and Research Centers into wealth and sustainable social and economic development for society.

Universities, especially in the Latin American and Caribbean region, are dealing with enormous tensions. While aiming to achieve humanistic goals and ideals, they struggle to exist, survive and remain relevant in an increasingly complex world. When the University is called upon to tighten its relationship with society, leaving the ivory tower, these tensions increase. The challenges become much greater for the academic community, both for professors and researchers, as well as for students, staff and clearly for academic administrators. And, in the Latin American and Caribbean region, it is essential that the University remains socially sanctioned, which has an impact on all aspects of its operations and direction.

One of the biggest challenges for Universities today involves the issue of innovation and the contribution to sustainable social and economic development, which means broadening the conditions that promote innovation and approaching non-academic productive sectors in a systematic and critical fashion. This requires institutions that generate knowledge through research and that transfer this knowledge to society. The creation of a favorable environment for this to occur involves a strong role for the government, for example in legislation, creating and stabilizing a regulatory framework that allows the process of translating research results into society to occur. National sovereignty and autonomy today are synonymous with the mastery of science, technology, and innovation (ST&I).

Traditionally, Latin American universities have a history of cooperation and networking, fruit of the awareness that truly relevant knowledge cannot be produced in isolation. This has generated a culture of peer-to-peer collaboration, nationally and internationally. But today we need new transnational mechanisms and instruments, autonomously generated by multilateral organizations (ENLACES and GUNI-ALC are two

examples), respecting regional realities, and which stimulate and induce cooperation – always in the service of environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development.

We must have a very clear purpose for creating a Latin American and Caribbean space for innovation, having as founding values solidarity and social responsibility, defining us as a regional bloc that shares the same development challenges and opportunities. We should even consider joining forces in the fight with the Latin American and Caribbean governments for the creation of a Latin American and Caribbean body aimed at an integrated regional management of ST&I.

This joint, regional and responsible vision must reconcile the humanities and the arts with the sciences and technology, aiming to provide a well-rounded education to a public that is aware of both responsibilities and possibilities. We aim to foster free-thinking innovation and solidarity among citizens with the ability to transform society, doing so in a participative and transdisciplinary way, creating new spaces conducive to innovation, stimulating creativity, and focusing on the great challenges of society, expressed in the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) of the UN.

Proposals:

- Strengthen regional integration spaces and networks (following the example of ENLACES) and South-South Cooperation.
- Create a Latin American and Caribbean body for integrated regional management of ST&I.
- Act in the third mission of the Universities in order to transform society, doing this in a participative and transdisciplinary way, focusing on the great challenges of society, expressed in the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) of the UN.
- Share resources and technological solutions.

THEME 10 – Futures of Higher Education:

Today, as in all the most serious crises that civilization has undergone, there is no possibility of envisioning futures without being prepared for the present, under penalty of a one-way plunge into utopias and immobility. What is certain is that, given the whole context that presents itself, post-pandemic times will be even more complex.

The countries that have most advanced and developed both economically and so-

cially have valued quality higher education and in its public orientation as foundations for building an egalitarian society, without which there is no social justice.

It is not possible to think of a country that despises intelligence and despises Institutions of Higher Education; without HEIs there is no development, without development there is no egalitarian society, without an egalitarian society there is no social justice, and without all this, there is no Democratic State of Law, no quality of life in its broadest sense, only a future of uncertainties. Despite the efforts of the universities themselves, the challenge of restoring the losses on all levels suffered during this period will be arduous.

While Universities are tasked with providing a multifaceted education for numerous professions, prepared for both present and future demands, with teaching focused on the real challenges of society and research conducive to national development – and all with transparent and participative governance – it behooves the State to critically reread its own actions. The established budget reductions, the consequence of which is the dismantling of universities as part of a policy of reducing the role of the State, must be urgently reviewed.

Therefore, it is up to the State, with the participation of public and community HEIs, to create and implement a national development plan that establishes education as a priority, with a clear commitment to guarantee government funding for public and community higher education, free education in federal and state HEIs, the expansion of the federal system of higher education with inclusion that meets the aims of the national education plan, student assistance as a form of inclusion and retention, respect for the autonomy of universities as codified in the Constitution and, within autonomy, respect for internal democracy in universities. It is imperative that the State provides funding for university research and outreach, financial support for the arts and culture, incentives for the implementation of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), policies aimed at greater participation of women, and diversity as a whole, which should be inclusive of support for North-South and South-South academic mobility, regional integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, and increased diversity through internationalization.

This moment we are living today requires States, governments, and institutions of Higher Education to strongly address the visible and urgent need for social, cultural, political, artistic, economic, and technological transformation. It is, therefore, the fundamental role of higher education institutions, acting as a national critical conscience, to defend political and social rights, and to critically formulate their inclusion in development models. It is how the university can contribute, with responsibility and social commitment, to new proposals that recreate the traditions of autonomy, social transformation, anti-authoritarianism, academic freedom and political influence based on knowledge and reason. Finally, it is the commitment of public and community insti-
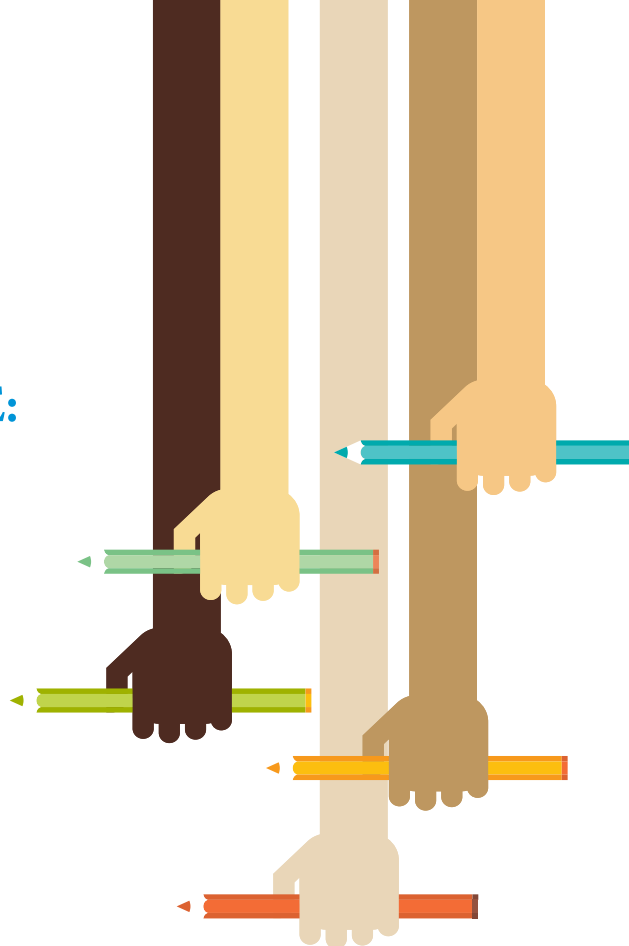
tutions of higher education to constantly fight for the promotion and strengthening of full democracy in the construction of futures marked by national development and defense of human rights.
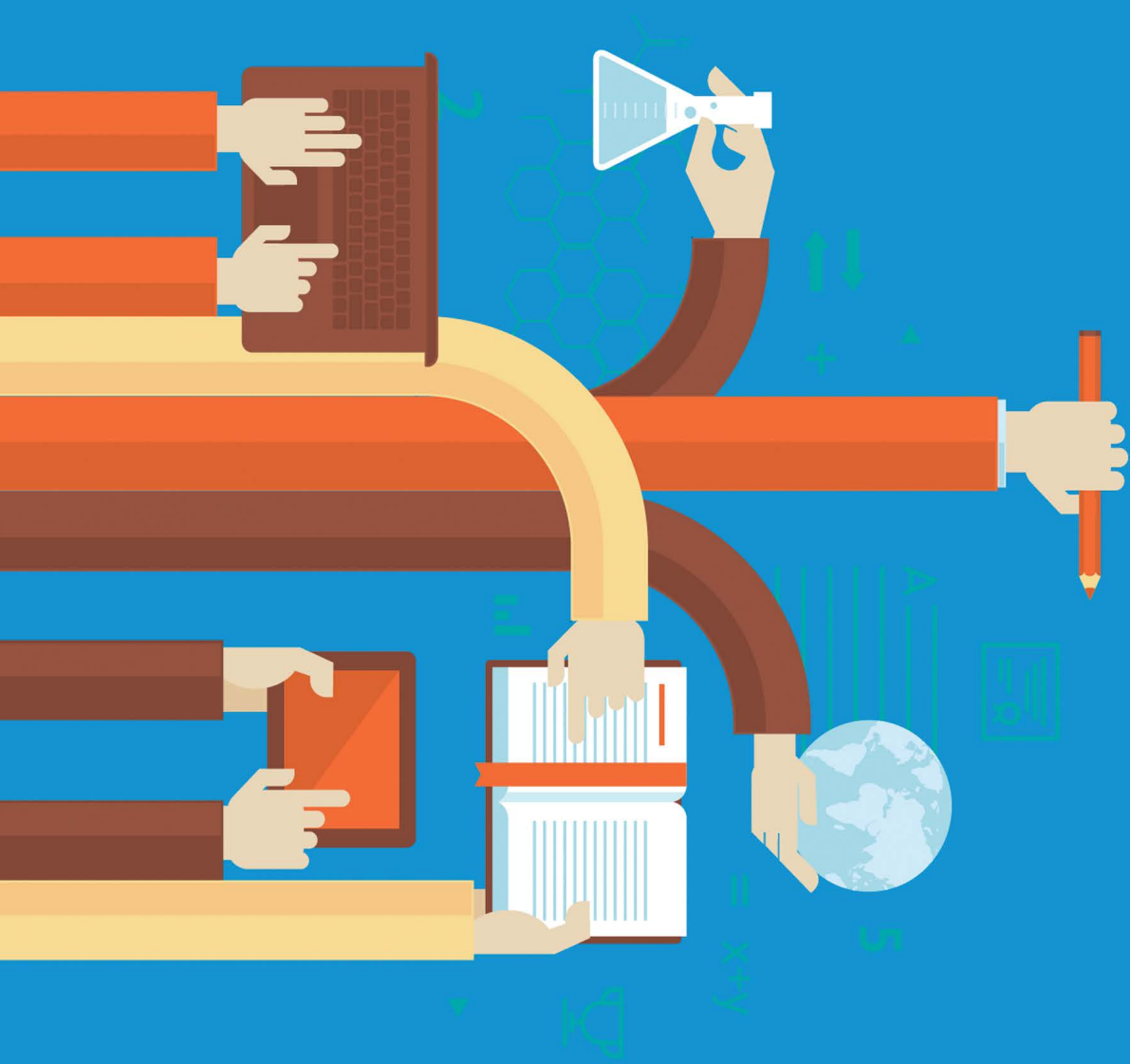
In A Universidade Necessária ("The Necessary University"), Darcy Ribeiro states that "no society can live without universities," because "the University is the womb of the ruling classes of the nation of the future." The University is thus the matrix of knowledge, that which sustains the nation of the future and, hence, the future of the nation. Our higher education institutions are not only necessary, they are essential. They are indispensable. With those words by Darcy, we say

Like the sun, we must rise!

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