

Newsletter

In this issue we will present two actions made recently. The first one is an experience in Latin America of training of directors of research centers on behalf of the Autonomous University of Bucaramanga in Colombia. Indeed, this not because you were a good researcher that you can be a good lab head: there are two different jobs which need different skills, and so different training.

The second is the feeling of an experience of distance courses given at the National Institute of Management Sciences located in Libreville, Gabon on risk management.

Wishing good reading. ■

Prof. Robert Laurini, president of USF-AWB.

Colombian University and USF establish a partnership for the creation and strengthening of research centers

With the support of USF, the Autonomous University of Bucaramanga (UNAB), in Colombia, is undertaking a process of strengthening and creating research centers in five strategic areas: health, bio-economy and bio-energy, data science, transformative innovation and policy studies

These centers respond to the economic and social development needs and opportunities in Colombia and are linked to university research directions.



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With the participation of USF expert professors, the objective was to define elements of success for the operation of the centers in the Colombian context without losing sight of the approach of internationalization of their operation. These include the definition of the research axes, the training of members and external collaborators of each center, the business plan and its sources of funding.

Since 8 March 2021, a training process has been initiated with Professors Robert Laurini and Jean Ruffier, involving about 25 researchers and potential members of the centers, divided into two groups. The training program lasts 12 hours, with a methodology that generates human capacities and input in terms of documentation to support the strategic planning of the centers.

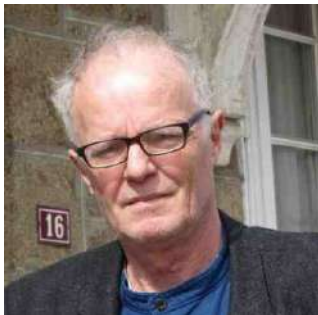
The training covers the following elements, the identification of lines of research, the construction of networks of international and socio-economic partners, the role of a head of laboratories, the identification of the first thesis subjects and equipment and finally the drafting of a feasibility report to be submitted to the university bodies.

USF is ready not only to repeat this training in different universities which want to strengthen their research, but also to negotiate in order to adapt it to the local context.

For further details, please contact Professors César D. Guerrero <cguerrer@unab.edu.co> and Robert Laurini <robert.laurini@usf-awb.org>. ■

Feelings after a virtual course on risk management at the National Institute of Management Sciences in Libreville, Gabon

Following an agreement signed on July 8, 2020, our colleague Prof. Marc Laudet from the University of Caen, France gave a video conference course at this institute on risk management in 4 sessions of 5 hours each from December 7 to 10. In his report, he tells us about his experience, and here are some excerpts.



"When Prof. André Tiran told me of this possibility, my acceptance was based on the fact that for me it was an opportunity to open new horizons or perspectives, an opportunity to meet students from a different culture. Virtual meeting, but still meeting.

From this point of view, I must say that it was a rewarding but somewhat frustrating opportunity. I think the "frustrating" side comes from the device that was adopted. The courses were done on Zoom. I was at home and, on my computer, I had the image of a whole class, a group of students somewhat indifferent, a bit like a nebula. I imagine that, on their part, they had my image either on their personal computers or on a screen (I don't know).

I did everything I could to try to get the students involved, but because they had to get up from their seats to the local computer to talk to me, very few have done so or have delegated one of them to report.

Unfortunately, I practice distance learning at the University of Caen, especially for small groups (typically 40 to 50 students). The students are, to date, each at home and connect from their own computer on the University's dedicated software (it would be possible to do so from other software). In this context, on the one hand, I managed to get

them to make presentations and to involve them much more actively: they exchange, speak, discuss directly (sometimes even, for some of them, more actively than during physical sessions).



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I had sent them the Power Point slides of the course, and one of them took it upon himself to advance it as I went along.

I am fully aware that this is a very different situation from that of Libreville: it is a work organized over time and that comes in addition to amphitheater courses (virtual), with students I already know and who know me. But as different as that may be, it seems to me, that there are avenues for reflection on the practical organization of future programs.

Another remark is that for this intervention, its practical organization was a little hasty. For example, I am not sure that 4 sessions of 5 hours, 4 days in a row, is the best conceivable pedagogical organization.

Whether it is on risk mapping and management (which was the case here) or on any other field, there is a whole new body of knowledge for students to appropriate. This necessary appropriation process requires time, questions, etc.

Otherwise, and in this respect the Gabonese students do not prove, in their behavior, very different from the French students of the same level that I supervise (I participate in the supervision of two masters: management of innovation, management of human resources): they only expect models directly applicable as such without considering their necessary adaptations to the realities or operational practices encountered.

However, studies at master level are not carried out to consider applying existing models without adaptation. And this requires personal work and time.

I was very pleased to be part of this experience, but I think it would be necessary to organize it a little differently."

For further details, please contact Professor Marc Laudet marc.laudet@unicaen.fr>. ■