

Newsletter

This issue is mainly devoted to actions carried out in tropical Latin America, namely in Colombia and Ecuador, in particular concerning the training of researchers. Indeed, these universities want to improve their teaching in order to be closer to European or North American standards.

Then will be presented an agreement organized under the aegis of USF for student exchanges between the Institute of Political Studies of Lyon and the African universities of the USF network.

Seeing the difficulties encountered by many researchers and academics in certain countries, our partner AVRIST (Association for the Promotion of International Scientific and Technical Relations) organizes on September 21, A workshop on barriers to scientific research and threats to researchers.

Wishing good reading. ■

Prof. Robert Laurini, Editor of the USF-AWB Newsletter.

Intervention report in Colombia

At the beginning of September 2022, Dr. Robert Laurini and Dr. Jean Ruffier went to Bucaramanga. Bucaramanga may be the second largest city in the country, but it is not the most developed in terms of university. The first big city after the Venezuelan border, it welcomes waves of migrants from this country with their procession of misery and insecurity. It is also an obligatory passage of cocaine traffickers. The Autónoma Universidad de Bucaramanga (UNAB) is at a key point in its career: it is opening the first three doctorate programs in systems engineering, computer science and also in educational sciences. This moment is crucial because the credibility of this rather modern private university is at stake, and we have been able to judge the quality of its teaching staff. As a result, USF chose to intervene first in videoconferencing because of the pandemic, but this time in September, in a situation. To justify the Colombian government financial support, this university has partnered with the Universidad

Autónoma de Manizales (UAM), and the Universidad de Occidente, a number of professors and PhD students who have followed our interventions remotely.



We have seen that our first contributions have borne fruit, and very quickly the training on the technical aspects of the design of doctorate programs moved on to discussions on the concrete problems faced by teachers and managers. Indeed, the transition to the training of doctors is upsetting the existing hierarchies and posing new problems that must be handled skillfully so as to transform tensions into springs of evolution and not into factors of blockages. We will have to follow the

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following steps, such as the integration of international students, which are indicators of progress. At the very least, we are convinced that UNAB will increase its attractiveness while contributing to the development of local economic activity. The participation of the other two universities has been fairly monitored, especially by doctoral students.

The mission ended with a meeting at the Embassy of France in Bogota in which USF explained its actions in Colombia and discussed future interventions in that country that would be the most strategic to carry out. David Bessières considers that we would be especially useful in cities like Bucaramanga, Baranquilla or Cartagena de los Indios.

In Bucaramanga, the UIS is focused on oil and already has doctorates and international relations. UNAB is an excellent choice, especially since Cesar Guerrero (one of our UNAB correspondents) is part of the office of Colifri, a university collaboration organization between France and Colombia.

In addition, a meeting was held with the Universidad ECCI in Bogota: officials agreed to establish a cooperation agreement with USF concerning the training of researchers.

For more information, contact Jean Ruffier <jean.ruffier@usf-awb.net>. ■

Potentialities for cooperation between USF and various universities in Ecuador

After the mission in Bucaramanga, Dr. Robert Laurini went to Quito to meet with the leaders of various universities and give seminars on territorial intelligence.

At the UDLA (Universidad de las Américas), the meetings provided a platform for actions concerning the training of researchers and the rapprochement with companies.



The new doctoral school in computer science of the EPN (Escuela Politécnica Nacional) had organized «a doctoral student day» to complete their training. In addition, during 3mn, a dozen PhD students or new doctors presented their respective work. This activity provided a glimpse of the research potential. Then, a meeting with the rector made it possible to discuss an agreement between the EPN and USF for the training of thesis supervisors and the rapprochement with companies.



Then, at the UPS (Universidad Politécnica Salesiana), we found that many representatives of local authorities had come to the seminar, more than the students of this institution. A meeting with the rector made it possible to discuss the possibilities of student exchanges.

To conclude this stay, a meeting took place at the Embassy of France in Quito which could be an actor in these different potentialities of cooperation between France and Ecuador.

For more information, contact Robert Laurini <Robert.Laurini@usf-awb.org>. ■

Student mobility between the African partners of USF and the Institute of Political Studies in Lyon: an agreement is signed

A cooperation agreement has just been established between USF and the Institute of Political Studies in Lyon. It provides for student mobility between IPS Lyon and African higher education institutions as active members of the USF network. As part of this partnership, students from IPS Lyon will do their final internship from four to six months in the African host country of the partner university. In return, African students will have the opportunity to follow part of their studies at IPS Lyon.

The African universities involved in these exchanges identify possible internship locations for French students, look for accommodation locations, ensure the reception and monitoring of French students during their internship period. Priority is given to internships planned in international organizations based in Africa, but also in NGOs engaged in African countries.

At the same time, African students who attend part of their studies at IPS Lyon have the opportunity to choose courses generally taught and to follow them as French students. The ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits thus acquired will be taken into account by the home university which validates the course.

An African student reception system is planned, as well as facilities to find accommodation during their studies in Lyon.



USF is responsible for facilitating and coordinating the mobility arrangements for African students and those of the IEP Lyon. The whole of this device fits well within the framework of the Bologna agreements, strengthens the mobility of students, contributes to their openness and exchange, and increases the attractiveness of studies undertaken on an international scale.

The University Institute of Abidjan is the first to engage in this cooperation: during the 2022/2023 academic year, two Lyon students will do their internship at a structure based in Abidjan, and two Ivorian students will follow a semester of study in Lyon.

For more information, contact Dr. Xavier Alphaize, Vice President of USF <xavier.alphaize@gmail.com>. ■

Workshops on barriers to scientific research and threats to researchers

The French Association for the Enhancement of International Scientific and Technical

Relations (AVRIST www.avrist.fr) is preparing a workshop dedicated to "Barriers to scientific research and threats to researchers: anticipation and treatment of situations, role of diplomatic posts, institutions and laboratories." It will take place in Paris on Wednesday 21 September from 4.30pm to 6.30pm.



Attacks on academic freedoms, obstacles to research activities, intimidation and threats against researchers are not new and they are multifaceted. Current events in recent years have, however, highlighted the fact that these barriers and threats are increasing, worsening, diversifying and expanding geographically.

The research communities mobilize to document and oppose situations of obstacles and threats, express themselves in the public space and alert and mobilize, where possible, public authorities. Over the past two years, many initiatives have addressed these issues and made it possible to share this finding more widely.

Our workshop is part of this context, but it does not intend to address obstacles in their entirety, including economic ones: it will focus on obstacles and threats «illegitimate» with regard to the values of academic freedom and freedom of expression of researchers.

It is a long-term step and aims to promote a fluid and regular dialogue and a better mutual knowledge between all stakeholders: researchers, university and institutional managers, diplomats, defense and security officials. And thus, to promote better anticipation and concerted implementation of countermeasures, beyond the initiatives taken by the scientific communities.

We will share testimonies, which may as well bear, for some countries, on the restrictions and threats they emit, as well as, for others, on the measures they adopt to anticipate and counter the threats that target their researchers, or to host threatened researchers.

For further information: <contact@avrist.fr>. ■