



## Sixth University Internationalization Seminar: New Frontiers for Inter-American Cooperation

(Washington, D.C., 26 February – 2 March 2018)



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## List of Acronyms and Institutional Links

Institutional/project names in languages other than English are provided.

2+2	University foreign exchange modalities between two universities wherein the student spends two years at one university and two at another, or two in one and three in another, or three in one and one in another, in a different country for a joint degree
2+3	
3+1	
AMEXCID	Mexican Agency for International Cooperation for Development ( <i>Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo</i> )
AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
ANDIFES	National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education, Brazil ( <i>Associação Nacional dos Dirigentes das Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior, Brasil</i> )
AP	Advanced placement
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency (part of CARICOM)
CCA	Climate change adaptation
CELPE-Bras	Brazil's official proficiency exam for Certificate of Proficiency in Brazilian Portuguese ( <i>Certificado de Proficiência em Língua Portuguesa para Estrangeiros</i> )
CGBU/GCUB	Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities / <i>Grupo Coimbra de Universidades Brasileiras</i>
CIDEIM	International Center for Medical Research and Training, Colombia ( <i>Centro Internacional de Capacitación e Investigaciones Médicas</i> )
Coimbra	Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities / CGBU ( <i>Grupo Coimbra de Universidades Brasileiras / GCUB</i> )
CONACYT	Mexican National Science and Technology Council ( <i>Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología</i> )
CSUCA	Central American Universities High Council ( <i>Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano</i> )
CUGH	Consortium of Universities for Global Health
DM	Disaster management
DR	Disaster risk
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ELAP	Emerging Leaders in the Americas program, Canada
GDP	Gross domestic product
GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery
GIST	Global Institute of Software Technology, Suzhou, Jiangsu, China
GMU	George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA
GPA	Grade point average
GW	George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA
Evidence Aid	Inspiring and enabling those guiding the humanitarian sector to apply an evidence-based approach
HE	Higher education
HSE International	Health, Safety & Environment Worldwide, based in the UK
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFEES	International Federation of Engineering Education Societies
ISIU	Safety Index for University Infrastructure ( <i>Índice de Seguridad en Infraestructura Universitaria</i> )
IESLAC	Project on Leadership and Commitment to Disaster Resilience in Higher Education Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean ( <i>Proyecto de Liderazgo y compromiso con la Resiliencia ante Desastres en las Instituciones de Educación Superior de Latinoamérica y el Caribe</i> )
INDM	Inter-American Disaster Mitigation Network, OAS
ISIU	University Infrastructural Safety Index ( <i>Índice de Seguridad en Infraestructura Universitaria</i> )
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MEC/SESU	Secretariat of Higher Education, Ministry of Education ( <i>Ministério da Educação, Secretaria de Educação Superior, Brasil</i> )
MCTIC	Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovations, and Communications, Brazil ( <i>Ministério de Ciência, Tecnologia, Inovações e Comunicações, Brasil</i> )
MOOCs	Massive open online courses
NCDs	Chronic noncommunicable diseases
NDs	Neglected diseases
NIH/NCI	United States National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute
OAS	Organization of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSSD	Ontario Secondary School Diploma
PAEC	OAS-CGBU Partnerships Program for Education and Training in Brazil ( <i>Programa de Alianzas para la Educación y la Capacitación no Brasil</i> )
PAHO/WHO	Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office of the World Health Organization
PCGIR	Disaster Risk Management in Central America: GFDRR Country Notes (World Bank)
PEC-G PEC-PG	Brazil's government scholarship program for undergraduate ( <i>Programa de Estudantes-Convênio de Graduação</i> ) and graduate/postgraduate students ( <i>Programa de Estudantes-Convênio de Pós-Graduação</i> ) for study in Brazil
PIDS	Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development, OAS ( <i>Programa Interamericana para el Desarrollo Sostenible, OEA</i> )
PRIDCA	Project on Institutional Strengthening of University Program Results for Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaption to Climate Change in Central America ( <i>Proyecto de Fortalecimiento de la Institucionalización de los Resultados del Programa Universitario para la Reducción del Riesgo de Desastres y Adaptación al Cambio Climático en Centroamérica</i> )
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
ReduLAC	Latin American and Caribbean Network of Environmental Funds ( <i>Red de Fondos Ambientales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe</i> )
ReduLAC/RRD	Latin American and Caribbean University Network for Disaster Risk Reduction ( <i>Red Universitaria de Latinoamérica y el Caribe para la Reducción del Riesgo de Desastres</i> )
RIMD	Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation ( <i>Red Interamericana de Mitigación de Desastres</i> )
RR	Risk reduction
SGU	St. George's University, Grenada
SISs	Small Island States
STDs	Sexually transmitted diseases
TB	Tuberculosis
TOEFL	Teaching of English as a Foreign Language
tropEd	Network for Education in International Health
U-Bordeaux	Institute of Public Health of the University of Bordeaux ( <i>Institut de Santé Publique de l'Université de Bordeaux</i> )
UFCSPA	Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre, Brazil ( <i>Universidade Federal de Ciências da Saúde de Porto Alegre, Brasil</i> )
UFPA	Federal University of Pará, Brazil ( <i>Universidade Federal do Pará, Brasil</i> )
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAM	Federal University of Amazonas, Brazil ( <i>Universidade Federal do Amazonas, Brasil</i> )
UNA-SUS	Open University of the Unified Health System, Brazil ( <i>Universidade Aberta do Sistema Único de Saúde, Brasil</i> )
UnB	University of Brasília, Brazil ( <i>Universidade de Brasília</i> )
UNB	University of New Brunswick, Canada
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UniPampa	Federal University of Pampa, Brazil ( <i>Universidade Federal do Pampa, Brasil</i> )
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UniTec	Central American Technological University, Honduras ( <i>Universidad Tecnológica Centroamericana, Honduras</i> )
UN-SPIDER	Space-based Applications for Managing Risk Reduction and Emergency Response, United Nations
US, USA	United States of America
USherbrooke	University of Sherbrooke / <i>Université de Sherbrooke</i> , Quebec, Canada
USP	University of São Paulo, Brazil ( <i>Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil</i> )
UWI	University of the West Indies (Caribbean-wide, with campuses in Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago)
UWISoN	University of West Indies School of Nursing, Jamaica
VBDs	Vector-borne diseases
VCPH/CVSP	PAHO Virtual Campus for Public Health ( <i>Campus Virtual de Salud Pública, OPS</i> )
Vo-Tech	Vocational and technical education

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Great appreciation is extended to the many OAS Ambassadors from Brazil, the Greater Caribbean, and countries bordering Brazil—as well as attachés and specialized staff. They all provided invaluable input to the discussions.

Thanks are also extended to all the Brazilian universities and to their many high-level representatives present at the meeting. We also thank the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their generous support of the scholarships program. Their commitment to regional capacity-building is commendable.

Invaluable input came from the Caribbean universities and network representatives from the Greater Caribbean subregion. We thank the PAHO/WHO Representative from Guyana for his input. Their contributions will surely lead to greater success in recruiting Caribbean students to the Scholarships Program.

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We thank those who collaborated in writing the report: Suzanna Stephens who drafted it as Temporary Advisor from PAHO; and Ms. Maryse Robert at OAS and Dr. Luis Gabriel Cuervo at PAHO/WHO, who approved the final version.



*Photo 1. 6th University Internationalization Seminar Participants at PAHO*

## Abstract

This seminar was the sixth of its kind in promoting the internationalization of Brazilian Universities. It is linked to the Scholarships Program offered by the Organization of American States (OAS); the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), which [joined in 2014 to add the health sciences to scholarship offers](#); and the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (in English, CGBU, or in Portuguese, *Grupo Coimbra de Universidades Brasileiras* / GCUB). Present were representatives from the OAS and PAHO, including ambassadors and emissaries, high-level officials, and faculty in the Americas. Two days of plenary sessions were followed by three days of closed sessions to develop the 2018 protocols. This report covers the first two days.

By December 2017, the OAS-PAHO agreement had offered 683 scholarships for specializations, master’s, and doctoral degrees in health to professionals from 27 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). However, the scholarships have been underutilized in the Caribbean. One of the objectives of the meeting was to figure out why and find solutions to tackling this and recruiting more students to Brazil.

CGBU offers a chance for students to study at 83 of the finest universities in Brazil. There are two government-sponsored scholarship programs in Brazil that pay full tuition and sometimes more: PEC-G for undergraduates, and PEC-PG for graduate/postgraduate students. The OAS, PAHO, the universities, and the countries share other costs. Most students return home after completing their studies to apply their newly acquired skills to domestic development. PAHO is conducting an assessment with program alumnae to assess the situation among health scholars.

In PEC-G, currently 60 countries are participating; nine of them from the Caribbean with agreements in force, and six more with agreements pending. However, Caribbean students make up only 7% of PEC-G students. PEC-PG covers tuition costs, stipends, and airfare. To date, PEC-PG has offered 3,000 scholarships; but from 2000–2017, only 198 have been awarded to the Caribbean.

There are several reasons to account for this low participation. The most salient is the language barrier, given that there are few places in the Caribbean where students can learn Portuguese. The second involves costs, since students have few resources; this means that the countries need to help support the program by assuming some of these costs. The third involves opportunity costs, since the student may have to leave a job to study; or a returning student with a degree may not be able to one that utilizes his or her newly earned skills. A fourth lies in credit transfer from one country to another, with most registrars not trained to handle international cases. A fifth lies in getting more students to study at universities in smaller cities. The sixth and final obstacle involves immigration policies.

Discussions centered on how to tackle these difficulties to make offers more attractive to both students and countries, with fewer hurdles. Collaboration in innovative solutions was encouraged, with much brainstorming among the participants.

The Caribbean needs more highly skilled personnel—especially in such critical areas as disaster mitigation and tropical disease control, which affect it disproportionately—and research to provide data and translate knowledge into evidence-based policy and implementation. The round tables dealt with these topics in depth, helping to establish program priority areas and concerns.

Creating academic mobility will help solve existing problems, not to mention enriching the mindset of individuals, families, and communities alike. The Scholarships Program offers much to promote development in the Caribbean, and the purpose of the meeting was to see it utilized.

## Executive Summary

### Background

In 2014, the Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Organization of American States (OAS) formed a strategic alliance,<sup>1</sup> affirming their commitment to education as one of the key determinants of health as well as to strengthening technical and research skills among human resources for health. Their partner, the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (CGBU, or “Coimbra”), encompasses 83 higher education (HE) institutions. The partners together offer a Scholarship Program.

By December 2017, the OAS-PAHO agreement had offered 683 scholarships for specializations, master’s, and doctoral degrees in health to professionals from 27 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Of these 683, 335 were for scholarships to health programs in Brazil: 73 master’s and 40 doctoral. However, the Caribbean remains underrepresented, due to factors to be explored further on in this report ([www.paho.org/researchportal/partnerships/oas](http://www.paho.org/researchportal/partnerships/oas)).

### Meeting Focus

- Exploring strategies for university internationalization and the challenges faces *vis-à-vis* attracting Caribbean students to educational cooperation programs in Brazil
- Strengthening awareness of the role of HE institutions as key engines of development
- Discussing the possibility of developing joint research among researchers from the Americas in areas of common interest to the Region
- Analyzing strategies to expand and qualify existing academic mobility programs in the Americas
- Engaging policy-makers, educators, and experts to examine the current situation of HE in the Americas and explore opportunities for regional academic cooperation on critical HE issues.

### Structure of the Meeting

The *Opening Ceremony* set the stage for collective problem-solving regarding the above objectives, in an open-minded setting replete with brainstorming. The partners reaffirmed their commitment to mutual goals and sought ways to make the program both more attractive to Caribbean students and more tailored to solving Caribbean problems (which many countries of the Americas share).

#### **Round Table 1: The Role of Universities in Building Knowledge and Human Capital for Better Preparedness and Response to Natural Disasters**

Various experts gave detailed presentations on disaster risk mitigation in the Caribbean and the Americas overall. The hemisphere is prone to disasters: in 2016, out of 882 natural disasters globally, 83 were in LAC, which additionally bears the highest costs in the world for overwhelming economic losses (roughly one third).

There are many types of disasters: geological, meteorological, climatological, hydrological, biological, and extra-terrestrial. Exposure to disasters has increased disproportionately to any decrease in vulnerability. For small island states and coastal areas, sea rise is a looming threat. Recent years have focused on disaster preparedness, but less on post-disaster situations, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Many international agreements are in place to deal with disasters and involve universities—the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, etc.—as well as inter-American schemes such as the OAS Department of Sustainable Development. Subregionally, there is the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Environmental Funds (RedLAC), the Central American University Council (CSUCA), the PRIDCA project on disaster risk reduction and adaption to climate change, and the IESLAC project on leadership and commitment to disaster resilience in HE institutions.

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9319:paho-and-oas-to-offer-scholarships-to-promote-higher-education-and-research-for-health-in-the-americas&Itemid=1690&lang=en%22](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9319:paho-and-oas-to-offer-scholarships-to-promote-higher-education-and-research-for-health-in-the-americas&Itemid=1690&lang=en%22)

*Vis-à-vis* the health sector, emphasis is placed on training health workers, assessing disaster risk, and gathering data for evidence-based interventions. Universities play an essential role in this regard; several have their own rapid response units. However, they need to do more sharing, networking, and community outreach.

### **Round Table 2: Challenges and Potential Solutions to Attract Students from CARICOM Countries to Educational Cooperation Programs in Latin America**

Almost all CARICOM countries have a university. Education accounts for 6-7% of government spending, and the rate of students enrolled in HE is 16%. However, HE is expensive and thus inaccessible to many, despite scholarships and loans. Coimbra's objective is to attract more Caribbean students to achieve its goal of helping create a new generation of professionals and leaders by providing quality education.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil has scholarship programs that pay at least full tuition. The OAS, PAHO, universities, and countries share other costs. PEC-G for undergraduates has 60 participating countries, nine of them in the Caribbean with existing agreements and six more pending; but only 7% of their students are from the Caribbean. PEC-PG for graduate/postgraduate students covers tuition costs, stipends, and airfare and, to date, has offered 3,000 scholarships; but from 2000–2017, only 198 went to the Caribbean.

Building research capacity is another issue. PAHO's *Report on Strengthening Research Capacities for Health in the Caribbean, 2007-2017*<sup>2</sup> provides examples of Caribbean participation in training offers. In recent years, 136 professionals from nine countries have received training in crucial areas.

Once students finish their studies and go home, universities need to be in touch with community needs and connect to the labor market, to help place returning students. Bonding schemes will help prevent “brain drain.”

### **Round Table 3: The Role of Universities in the Prevention, Control and Elimination of Tropical Diseases in the Caribbean**

Universities are a living laboratory for fighting tropical diseases, a major burden in the Americas and critically in need of research and training. Data on these is necessary to fuel implementation and elimination efforts.

Universities' role mainly focuses on diagnostics, vaccines, and medicines. Many tropical diseases—e.g., dengue—need more work on diagnostics. Additionally, universities need to get involved in research partnerships and field implementation. Issues involve funding, intellectual property barriers, faculty involvement, and universities' role in setting national research priorities.

In the context of disease elimination in Guyana, it is dealing with 17 diseases, with six main foci where universities can play a positive role: (1) sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), through monitoring and research; (2) tuberculosis (TB), through effective treatment and research to optimize implementation and prevent resistance; (3) vector-borne diseases (VBDs), by participating with other actors to train human resources sustainably; (4) neglected diseases (NDs), by developing modalities for micro-planning *vis-à-vis* the 2020 elimination goals; (5) antimicrobial resistance (AMR), by recognizing the situation and training accordingly; and (6) emergencies, by establishing crucial links with French Guiana and Brazil. Research needs outreach to function properly; this calls for university extension and descending the ‘ivory tower.’

Discussion focused on the need for research and training, with additional work in diagnostics and vaccines. A horizontal approach was preferred, with more networking and knowledge transfer to communities, policy-makers, and stakeholders. Coimbra has training offers in global health, and both Brazil and PAHO offer online courses.

### **Discussion: Differences and Similarities between Structures, Credit Validation, and Diplomas in Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral Programs—Overview of the Americas**

UniTec, Honduras' global university, noted that global enrollment in HE has increased and will continue to do so (by 2025, to 262 million). This is due to geographic expansion, new programs, and new modalities. While costs for face-to-face HE will continue to grow, massive open online courses (MOOCs) are cheap to implement, can meet demand, and can involve no cost. Hybrid courses are another option, along with

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<sup>2</sup> Available from <http://iris.paho.org/xmlui/handle/123456789/34342>.

internships and 2+2 and 3+1 transfer programs. Over four million students are studying abroad. Central American universities emphasize internationalization to bring in international staff and send students abroad.

Student mobility is an issue, with Central American students facing challenges in the form of economic limitations, lack of networks to promote programs, low program office effectiveness, and registrars’ offices untrained to deal with different academic credit systems. The Scholarships Program faces challenges and opportunities in recruiting students from vulnerable or isolated populations and tackling the language barrier.

The University of the West Indies (UWI) stated its need to create a structure for credit and diploma validation at all levels. UWI is a true regional university for the Caribbean, with several branches, currently working to go global. It has a virtual open campus plus distance and professional education, as well as formal agreements with many national and community colleges. There is a 2+2 transfer program. Internationalization is a strategic goal and UWI partners with over 150 other HE institutions to facilitate staff movement.

The University of Sherbrooke in Canada noted that in today’s globalized world, there is a need to integrate objectives from many countries in order to stay competitive despite existing gaps. Internships for capacity-building can take place in cooperating institutions and involve initiation into international cooperation. Mobility means learning how to advance and integrate, in an atmosphere of inclusion and open-mindedness.

#### **Round Table 4: Strategies and Challenges for University Cooperation in the Americas**

This panel discussion included representatives from Caribbean universities, a border university in Brazil, and the USA. Following the panelists’ introducing their programs, they discussed ways and means to encourage internationalization and attract students to different locations in Brazil. Caribbean students need to be aware of the Program. Contacting scholarship divisions in the various government ministries as the first point of contact would help make Program information available.

Universities do more than just teach and conduct research; they encourage outreach and integration of international students into the local development landscape, involving them in a broader community based experience where they can grow academically as well as culturally and personally. In so doing, such activities facilitate cultural sensitivity as well as fulfill academic requirements. This meets the goals set by internationalization.

Human bridges were a hot topic. Universities should facilitate and empower faculty champions. They should develop student and faculty exchange schemes. Often small, individual projects brought about by exchange can lead to bigger things. Universities can also find ways to engage the great positive energy of their students.

Language and visas remain obstacles. Promotion of foreign language learning is a must. Universities might identify champions for language-learning through a joint academic approach. Immigration regulations can hinder human bridges from crossing borders by denying entry visas.

To push beyond the traditional view of student exchange, opportunities need to be expanded across new areas. Different disciplines interacting and interfacing can create innovative solutions. One strategy that could be used is cross-cultural research projects that allow for maximization of resources, both human and material, with a view to building sustained collaboration. Universities need new ways of collaboratively engaging beyond the box, moving beyond current solutions to prevent silos.

Informing students of non-traditional modalities might increase short-term uptake in the Caribbean. Small island states face challenges with rising seas and climate change, creating both need and opportunities for research and collaboration. One suggestion was to create a *Clearinghouse for the Americas* where all can interface. Participants saw the meeting as an excellent forum for debate on internationalization. Universities and institutions can look for opportunities to build bridges beyond present structures and increase academic mobility.

Final remarks were briefly made by Dr. Valéria Souza de Silva, Director of Coimbra and Coordinator of the Scholarships Program; and Dr. Luis Gabriel Cuervo, Senior Advisor on Health Systems Research at PAHO. They thanked the participants for their valuable input and for promoting the program and its goals, with education perceived as a collective responsibility. A closing activity offered a historical slideshow on PAHO.

## Introduction

## Background

Relevant documents: Annex X, Scholarships program fact sheet<sup>3</sup>; Annex I, Program and List of Participants; Annex II, Scholarships program data

In 2014, the Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Organization of American States (OAS) formed a strategic alliance<sup>4</sup> to strengthen health systems, advance the regional *Policy on Research for Health*<sup>5</sup> for the Americas, and support the subsequent *Strategy on Human Resources for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage*.<sup>6</sup> This alliance involves a commitment on the part of both institutions to consider education as one of the key determinants of health and strengthen technical and research skills among human resources for health. The Scholarships Program (hereafter often referred to as “the Program”) is a partnership between the OAS, PAHO/WHO, the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (CGBU, generally referred to as “Coimbra”), and the Mexican National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT) in conjunction with the Mexican Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID).

Coimbra and OAS have held six University Internationalization seminars; and after signing the cooperation agreements with OAS and with CGBU, PAHO joined these efforts. By December 2017, the OAS-PAHO agreement had offered 683 scholarships for specializations, master’s, and doctoral degrees in health to professionals from 27 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). PAHO has updated periodic assessments of the outputs of the OAS-PAHO Scholarship program. In addition to the descriptors, assessments have included scientific production and publications, and surveys related to reinsertion and work experience. Such findings are published as they become available, at: [www.paho.org/researchportal/partnerships/oas](http://www.paho.org/researchportal/partnerships/oas).

## Meeting Focus

This sixth meeting was devoted to attracting Caribbean students to Brazilian universities, as well as to involving universities in such key issues as disasters and tropical disease research. Objectives included

- Exploring strategies for university internationalization and the challenges faces *vis-à-vis* attracting Caribbean students to educational cooperation programs in Brazil
- Strengthening awareness of the role of HE institutions as key engines of development
- Discussing the possibility of developing joint research among researchers from the Americas in areas of common interest to the countries of the Region
- Analyzing strategies to expand and qualify the existing academic mobility programs in the Americas
- Engaging policy-makers, educators and experts to examine the current situation of tertiary education in the Americas and to explore opportunities for regional academic cooperation on critical HE issues.

<sup>3</sup> Available from: [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9516%3A2014-paho-and-oas&catid=1484%3Apartnerships-research-&Itemid=40676&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9516%3A2014-paho-and-oas&catid=1484%3Apartnerships-research-&Itemid=40676&lang=en).

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9319:paho-and-oas-to-offer-scholarships-to-promote-higher-education-and-research-for-health-in-the-americas&Itemid=1690&lang=en%22](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9319:paho-and-oas-to-offer-scholarships-to-promote-higher-education-and-research-for-health-in-the-americas&Itemid=1690&lang=en%22).

<sup>5</sup> Available from: <http://www.paho.org/hq/images/stories/KBR/Research/research%20policy%20on%20research%20for%20health%20english.pdf?ua=1>.

<sup>6</sup> Available from: [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwisozU6OLZAHVJ7oMKHZpaB1cQFgggMAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.paho.org%2Fhq%2Findex.php%3Foption%3Dcom\\_docman%26task%3Ddoc\\_download%26gid%3D42333%26Itemid%3D270&usq=AOvVaw2\\_5ESCK-68LkF-vk8gicLJ](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwisozU6OLZAHVJ7oMKHZpaB1cQFgggMAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.paho.org%2Fhq%2Findex.php%3Foption%3Dcom_docman%26task%3Ddoc_download%26gid%3D42333%26Itemid%3D270&usq=AOvVaw2_5ESCK-68LkF-vk8gicLJ).

## Recommendations

### To All Parties

- Encourage innovative practices for the Scholarships Program and capacity-building at all levels. Strategic plans should address human resource needs and provide *a priori* language proficiency.
- Encourage knowledge translation into public policy, based on evidence-based research findings.
- Facilitate internationalization and student mobility among countries through joint collaboration—OAS, PAHO, CARICOM, Coimbra, national ministries of education, and universities—to develop a course to train university registrar’s offices how to deal with international academic credit systems.
- Build collaboration enabling students to participate in a broader, community-based experience providing both academic and cultural experience, encouraging both outreach and internationalization.
- Have trainees provide a concept proposal, undergo peer review, critique each other, and present their critiqued concept papers.
- Collectively organize (OAS, PAHO/WHO, NIH, Coimbra, and the Brazilian universities) and participate in a preliminary three-day seminar with the most qualified experts and researchers to discuss possible joint projects for education and training. Hold a second meeting on science and technology. Include universities and other organizations that can contribute to the discussion.
- Create a Clearinghouse for the Americas for all institutions, players, and students where they can interface.

### To OAS

- Regarding disaster mitigation and response (DMR), facilitate efforts by Member States and their universities to spur local development in this area through university outreach and university rapid response units. Continue to build connections to pre-existing initiatives and universities.
- Focus the Program on capacity-building, internationalization, and knowledge transfer. Make age limits flexible.
- Conduct a road trip throughout the Caribbean to assess country needs and connect with nuances. Use this knowledge to attract more Caribbean students to scholarships in Brazil. Collaborate with the scholarship divisions of various government ministries as the first point of contact for promoting the scholarships in their country.

### To PAHO

- Facilitate efforts by Member States and their universities to spur local development in health-related areas of DMR and community outreach. Focus on cooperation in post-disaster mental health.
- Regarding neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), facilitate research and training through the Scholarships Program and collaborate with Member States to assess health capacity. Explore how the Program might bridge critical health capacity gaps, as tropical diseases affect the Greater Caribbean.
- Regarding chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), explore how PAHO—through the Program—might help fill gaps in essential human capacity, especially in the Caribbean where NCDs disproportionately affect its people.
- Foster capacity-building, internationalization, and knowledge transfer in the Program. Make age limits flexible.
- Collaborate with the scholarship divisions of various government ministries as the first point of contact for promoting the scholarships in their country.

### To the Countries

- Given universities’ tremendous intellectual capital, encourage them to make outreach activities (i.e., practical experience in local communities) a degree requirement or a special training option.
- Assess and communicate health professionals’ capacity needs to Scholarships Program officials and utilize offers to help fill such needs. Inter-ministerial communication is crucial; all competitive countries have this.
- The Americas being disaster-prone, work with PAHO, OAS, and universities to utilize all available resources to enhance disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response—including safer dwellings.
- Build political will to complement the offer for free training at Brazilian universities by providing national stipends to cover living costs abroad and/or for time to learn Portuguese during the academic recess. Through public-private partnerships, provide reentry grants for returning students as a small but sound long-term investment.
- Develop innovative bonding schemes to combat ‘brain drain’ by placing returning students in appropriate jobs, working with national universities, labor offices, and ministries to accomplish this.
- Develop teacher exchange programs for Portuguese or Spanish to build proficiency and qualify professionals to “teach the teachers” in the Caribbean countries. Push foreign language early on.
- The English-speaking Caribbean has long-standing sandwich programs for sharing with other countries.

## To Coimbra and the Universities

### *General*

- Explore new and different ways of engagement with partners. Develop and engage in partnerships and networks. Turn these into global consortia. Develop student and faculty exchange schemes.
- Validate global health as an academic field and get involved in sharing to develop better career paths and meet student needs for field work and a clear career path. Establish flexible age limits.
- Develop curricula in global health, especially in the areas below, focusing on master’s-level courses.
- Allocate more resources for research and training in priority areas.
- Facilitate and empower faculty champions to take the initiative to develop innovative new programs and approaches so projects can develop and grow. Search for possible collaboration across countries.
- Direct student energy to community development. Learn from students and communities.
- Recognize, facilitate, and exploit the transformative nature of internationalization.
- Promote cross-cultural research projects to maximize resources, both human and material, with a view of building sustained collaboration.

### *Disasters*

- For the research agenda, generate new knowledge and understanding of what steps to take to keep people safe from natural hazards and help them recover quickly from catastrophic events.
- Create one-stop shopping for research evidence. Organize training workshops.
- Institute university rapid response units to make universities and communities safer.
- Prepare local protocols for disaster risk mitigation (DMR) to have ready in the event of a disaster; implement them to benefit communities. Conduct stakeholder dialogues, providing evidence briefs.
- Connect to the OAS Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation.
- Help link with neighboring countries in the event of a disaster.
- Improve DMR curricula to include practical experience as part of degree requirements. Get both students and their advisors into the field, along with foreign students, to carry out community outreach, assess local needs, and help prepare and empower communities to better cope with a potential disaster.
- Place special emphasis on capacity development to handle post-disaster mental health issues.
- UnB has a seismological and tropical disease center whose work experiences and government alliances could enhance programs. Universities might go into the field to conduct research, enabling governments to formulate evidence-based policies. Though UnB has very strong research groups in DRR, it must develop a corps of Brazilian researchers in other areas of DM, with opportunities for follow up on established goals.

### *Tropical Disease Research, Infectious and Chronic Disease Control*

- Work with countries to meet their needs by offering multi-level training in specific, crucial areas of medical practice and research, in programs tailored to meet country needs. Explore tropEd.
- Explore public-private partnerships and build political will to fund research.
- Involve faculty and students, including international students, in outreach activities.
- In terms of research capacity, train researchers to conduct research and link with policy-makers to ensure the effective translation of evidence-based research findings into informed public policy.
- Get involved in priority areas: for neglected diseases (NDs), develop modalities for micro-planning vis-à-vis the 2020 elimination goals; vector-borne diseases (VBDs), participate with other actors to train human resources sustainably; sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), help end the epidemic through monitoring and research; tuberculosis (TB), provide effective treatment and research to optimize implementation and prevent resistance; antimicrobial resistance (AMR), recognize the situation and train accordingly; for chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), recognize how they disproportionately affect the Caribbean and address this in professional training.
- Join boards to participate collaboratively and to offer and share expertise. Get involved with the Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH) and attend their meetings.

### *Language training in Portuguese*

- In the short term, accept the generous offer by Brazilian universities to provide language training in Portuguese, utilizing the lapse between academic terms (May through March) as a time for students receiving scholarships to learn the language.
- In the medium to long term, spearhead teacher exchange programs to help countries develop their own programs for Portuguese by having trained and proficient staff “teach the teachers.”

Day 1: Monday, 26 February 2018

## Opening Ceremony and Welcome Remarks

Session Video <https://paho.webex.com/paho/ldr.php?RCID=89d92e764b97cdf4f698d1930a3a7cdb>

### Dr. Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, OAS

Dr. Osborne heartily welcomed all the participants, reaffirming the shared OAS-PAHO commitment to promote integral development in all Member States and the key role that universities play in this process. Internationalization constitutes an active mindset that acts as a catalyst to replace a more insular view, fostering a higher level of development in the Region of the Americas (hereafter referred to as “the Region”).

As to the dynamics of this process, Dr. Osborne set the direction for the discussions as one of solidarity and cooperation, with all countries equally responsible for goal-setting. This creates collective opportunities for joint research that will build and prepare the Region’s human capital to deal with today’s forced industrial/technological revolution and develop solutions to tackle the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The peoples of the Americas must be equipped with the necessary means, which means guaranteeing high-quality education. Doing so requires either reducing or eliminating current obstacles to exchange, both in terms of knowledge transfer and professional mobility. It means fostering internationalization.

As far back as 1958, the OAS had either established or supported educational programs that have continued to grow and flourish: e.g., Brazil’s CGBU. Coimbra has a commendable history of facilitating positive partnerships and providing new types of educational and professional opportunities available to all. Over 50,000 students have applied for scholarships in Brazil, awarding grants to 33 countries and maintaining the gender balance. Since 2014, PAHO has enriched this process by providing training in the health sciences.

The main objective of the Scholarships Program has been to promote partnerships and collaboration. This year, special emphasis is being placed on attracting Caribbean students through new and innovative programs. In Central America, UNITEC—Honduras’ global university—has been a leader in developing such programs. Canada’s role has also been excellent in its history of cooperation with the Caribbean, as shown in PAHO’s recent *Report on Strengthening Research Capacities for Health in the Caribbean, 2007–2017*.<sup>7</sup>

Creative, actionable recommendations are needed to propel the Region forward and to act as a catalyst. Participants deserve thanks for their past, present, and future efforts towards the move forward.

### Ambassador José Luiz Machado e Costa, Permanent Mission of Brazil at the OAS

The Ambassador greeted panel members and Brazilian colleagues present—three rectors from Brazilian universities, colleagues from CGBU, and Dr. Gustavo Barbosa, Secretary of the Division for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—as well as other ambassadors, partners, and participants. He thanked OAS and PAHO for building the Scholarship Program and helping thousands of students.

The meeting’s aim is to expand regional cooperation. The Ambassador emphasized building new frontiers and reaffirmed the collective goal of promoting education, along with bridging gaps and program consolidation.

This year, the Program seeks to attract more students from the Caribbean, especially Haiti and the English-speaking Caribbean. The 2018 protocols will focus on disaster response, tropical diseases, and research capacity.

### Dr. Francisco Becerra Posada, Assistant Director, PAHO/WHO

Dr. Becerra thanked all participants, experts, and guests—and also the OAS for proposing this event and making the scholarships a reality. PAHO has seen the benefits of these scholarships since its 2014 agreement with the OAS and Coimbra. The graduates benefitting from these scholarships have had a great impact, not only at the micro level of their family but also at the macro level of their respective countries.

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<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, footnote 1.

In just three years, 335 professionals have studied in Brazil in 73 master's and 40 doctoral programs, with many due to complete their studies and return home. At the 29<sup>th</sup> *Pan American Sanitary Conference* in 2017, the PAHO *Strategy for Human Resources in Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage*<sup>8</sup> spearheaded social innovation. Perceiving health as a multisectoral responsibility, it seeks mechanisms to ensure greater health and equity.

The topics to be discussed during this meeting all tie in to PAHO's strategic goals. Involving universities and promoting high-level training can only enhance their achievement.

**Emmanuel Zagury Tourinho, President, National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (ANDIFES); Rector, Federal University of Pará (UFPA), Brazil**

Dr. Tourinho greeted all partners and guests, especially from Brazilian universities. He emphasized the common goal of promoting education throughout the Americas to foster economic and social development. Thanks to Coimbra, PAEC has successfully created opportunities for students graduating from master's and PhD programs at many universities. UFPA has hosted some 200 scholarship recipients, with excellent results; their accomplishments will promote future cooperation among researchers and graduate professionals. The Brazilian universities approve of this Program and actively promote its success, with hopes that the OAS and PAHO will continue it. However, he noted that cooperation is also needed from other relevant institutions.

**Rossana Valéria de Souza e Silva, Executive Director, Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (CGBU); General Coordinator, OAS-CGBU Partnerships Program for Education and Training (PAEC), Brazil**

Presentation: Annex III

Dr. Silva's presentation focused on how universities have formed an association with the CGBU. She greeted all participants and her Brazilian colleagues, especially the Brazilian rectors and Caribbean and Latin American representatives. She saw the meeting as a great opportunity to follow up on progress made by the Program.

To date, thanks to the scholarships, over 3,000 students have studied in Brazilian universities. They have taken advantage of the program to forge ahead in their education and personal development. Universities have a responsibility to the Region to offer access to their many different programs; and they take this responsibility seriously, aiming to find solutions to tackle problems in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The scholarships do more than simply conferring a title by contributing to development of children, families, cities, and communities. They provide young people with a chance to learn how to conduct research before returning to their home countries, armed with knowledge that will help the population find solutions to health problems.

PAEC aims to help. The goal is to create a new generation of professionals and leaders with quality education. Some 62 Brazilian universities are now offering scholarships to students from other LAC countries. Coimbra encompasses 57 federal and 20 state universities, plus some community colleges, for a grand total of 83 Higher Education institutions throughout Brazil. A total of 2,865 master's and doctoral scholarships have been awarded. The common goal is to promote internationalization: one, by contributing to the development of bright individuals in the Americas; and two, by promoting integration and regional development by offering master's and doctoral training, to empower leaders capable of working in different sectors, e.g., universities and research institutions, government agencies, the private sector, etc.

The social dimension transcends mobility. The knowledge that these students acquire promotes equality, with students teaching others about their culture, educational system, and attitudes. The Program's goal is to promote mobility and quality internationally.

Since starting in 2011, the Program has increased the number of its scholarships and collaborations in over 500 courses of study. The 52 most important universities all offer scholarships. Every year, we receive 6,000 applications, mostly from Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Haiti. Long-term stipends help students complete the course. Funding comes primarily from the government, with a huge total investment amounting to US\$ 9,203,106. The program involves a multitude of people and organizations: PAHO, OAS, embassies, etc.

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<sup>8</sup> Available from:

[http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=42891&Itemid=270&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=42891&Itemid=270&lang=en)

In conclusion, Dr. Silva thanked the rectors and coordinators dedicated to following, advising, and counseling students. She expressed hopes to develop the Program further, to the point where all countries have their own master's and PhD programs.

### **Round Table 1: The Role of Universities in Building the Knowledge and Human Capital for Better Preparedness and Response to Natural Disasters**

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Moderator: Márcia Abrahão Moura, Rector of the University of Brasília (UnB)

Presentation: Annex IV; Session Video: <https://paho.webex.com/paho/ldr.php?RCID=b115b6a36b9efb22504faf09cf694a25>

#### **Mr. Cletus Springer, Director, Department of Sustainable Development, OAS**

What do we mean by disaster? The United Nations *International Strategy for Disaster Reduction* (UNISDR)<sup>9</sup> defines it as “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.”<sup>10</sup> An event does not equal a disaster except by how it impacts the area and population affected. The evidence of the past 20 years shows how exposure to disasters in LAC has increased disproportionately to any decrease in vulnerability.

Disasters can be small, large, frequent or infrequent, chronic or cumulative, or of slow or sudden onset. There is a very high incidence of disasters in LAC, with the Americas—especially the Caribbean—considered hazard prone, with storms and ecological disasters, predominantly forest fires; extreme weather; earthquakes; and sea-level rise. The latter is especially frightening for islands and coastlines: mudslides and storm destruction in Dominica; narrow coastlines and steep slopes vulnerable to storm surges in St. Lucia; and vulnerability to wind exposure in Barbados.

There are two key instruments used to reduce the risk of disasters: the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*<sup>11</sup> (an instrument of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction/UNISDR) and the United Nations *Paris Agreement*<sup>12</sup> on climate change. The Paris Agreement aims to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change by maintaining global temperatures at acceptable levels and increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, by fostering climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions in a way that does not threaten food production. The OAS Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS) focuses on disaster response and oversees implementing the *Inter-American Plan for Disaster Prevention and Response and the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance*<sup>13</sup> (2012): exchanging experiences, knowledge, and best practices throughout the Inter-American Disaster Mitigation Network (INDM). This includes application and satellite earth observation data and image processing, as well as harmonizing cross-border and community-based early warning systems.

Finally, there is the role that universities can play in community disaster response. The Sendai mandate for universities<sup>14</sup> aims to mitigate new and existing disaster risks by implementing integrated measures to prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and strengthen resilience. Its four priorities are understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

Universities need to dedicate more action to tackling underlying disaster risk drivers. These involve the consequences of poverty and inequality; climate change and variability; unplanned and rapid urbanization; poor land management and compounding factors such as demographic change; weak institutional arrangements; non-risk-informed policies, lack of regulation and incentives for private disaster risk reduction

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<sup>9</sup> Available from: <https://www.unisdr.org/>.

<sup>10</sup> Available from: <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology>.

<sup>11</sup> Available from: <https://sendaimonitor.unisdr.org/>.

<sup>12</sup> Available from: [http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9485.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php).

<sup>13</sup> Available from: <http://rimd.org/plan-en/>.

<sup>14</sup> Available from: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/.../A\\_RES\\_69\\_283.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/.../A_RES_69_283.pdf).

(DRR) investment; complex supply chains; limited availability of technology; and unsustainable uses of natural resources, declining ecosystems, pandemics, and epidemics.

The research agenda is based on the following factors and agenda items:

- Strengthening baselines and assessing disaster risks, vulnerability, capacity, exposure, hazard characteristics and their possible sequential effects on social and ecosystems
- Updating/disseminating location-based disaster risk data to decision-makers and at-risk communities
- Evaluating, recording, sharing, and publicly accounting for disaster losses
- Understanding economic, social, health, education, environmental, and cultural heritage impacts, using event-specific hazard-exposure and vulnerability information
- Strengthening technical and scientific capacity to build on existing knowledge
- Applying methodologies and models to assess disaster risks, vulnerabilities, and exposure
- Promoting investments in innovation and technology development of long-term, multi-hazard, solution-driven research in disaster risk management (DRM), to address gaps, obstacles, interdependencies, and challenges in a cross-cutting approach to disaster risks
- Promoting the incorporation of disaster risk knowledge in all relevant areas into formal and non-formal education, as well as civic and professional education
- Promoting national strategies to strengthen public education and awareness of DRR
- Promoting common efforts in partnership with the scientific and technological community, academia, and the private sector to establish, disseminate, and share good practices internationally
- Conduct research training tailored to address the main components of communities at risk

In conclusion, what this means for the research agenda is to generate new knowledge and understanding of what steps to take to keep people safe from natural hazards and help them recover quickly from catastrophic events. It looks at nature and infrastructure under different stress scenarios, seeking to apply this new knowledge/understanding when designing hazard mitigation measures; eliminate developmental drivers that feed disasters; make social and economic infrastructure (homes, business, roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, health centers) more resilient to disaster and climate change impacts; and identify new forms of renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **Prof. Marco Antonio Fontoura Hansen, Rector, Federal University of Pampa (UniPampa), Brazil**

Presentation: Annex V

Dr. Hansen greeted the participants and joined the discussion on education and how it affects society. His purpose was to discuss internationalization and its role in Brazil, as well as the challenges it poses. Regarding the topic at hand, the Brazilian universities are hoping for optimal results in preventing disasters through research. How can this be accomplished?

Dr. Hansen defined disasters as “a major adverse event resulting from natural processes of the earth: floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other geological processes.” It is important to differentiate between natural events, natural hazards, and natural disasters. Natural events occur that may or may not cause harm to humans and animals. Natural hazards are natural phenomena that might have a negative effect on humans or the environment. Natural disasters are the result of the impact of an extreme or intense natural phenomenon on a social system, causing serious damages and losses that exceed the capacity of those affected to cope with the impact.

*Geophysically*, LAC has volcanoes and massive earth movements. *Hydrologically*, it has landslides, floods, and wave action. *Meteorologically*, it has storms and tornadoes, lightning and fog, and extreme temperatures. *Climatologically*, it has tsunamis, drought, and wildfires. *Biologically*, it has animal accidents, *Aedes aegypti* infestation, and other insect infestation. *Extra-terrestrially*, it has meteor strikes and space weather.

Disasters occur mainly because of vulnerability, or the inability of a system or a unit to withstand the effects of a hostile environment. When a natural hazard intersects with a vulnerable system, there is a risk of disaster—and LAC is a vulnerable region. In 2016, out of 882 natural disasters globally, 83 were in LAC; of 8,734 deaths, 1,750 were in LAC; of total global economic losses of US\$ 153.74 billion, US\$ 57.2 billion were in LAC.

Before disasters strike, the disaster management cycle involves mitigation and preparedness; and afterwards, response and recovery. Disaster prevention involves the use of geotechnology, training and preparation of specialized personnel, and mapping vulnerability zones.

UniPampa has a master's program for international professionals together with the National Institute of Space Research and the Federal University of Santa Maria. It is at the final stages of building an International Professional Master's Degree in Political and Space Sciences for LAC, with remote sensing and space policy.

In closing, collaboration is crucial. Main collaborators are the OAS, PAHO/WHO, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Platform for *Space-based Applications for Managing Risk Reduction and Emergency Response* (UN-SPIDER), and others.

**Dr. Ahmad Firas Khalid, Health Research Professional, McMaster University, Canada**

Presentation: Annex IV; Video: <https://youtu.be/HB-M6yPREIY>

How can universities build knowledge to help with disasters? Dr. Khalid shared an anecdote of what happened in Haiti during the cholera epidemic following the 2010 earthquake that killed some 230,000 people. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others flooded into to a natural disaster zone with a hat of “we need to save as many lives as possible,” without necessarily considering what else to consider in that context. Those on the ground did not have access to timely, context-specific, jargon-free evidence that could have warned them that overcrowding and lack of proper sanitation would lead to another disaster. When it struck, the cholera epidemic infected 711,558 people. In the midst of all this, those who worked on the scene discovered that there were special needs. They needed tailor-made evidence that worked for them.

What is the problem? Where can solutions be found? Are they applicable? How should the problem be framed? What are the options that apply? The experts forget to ask people what their needs are.

In a disaster situation, decisions must be made; but there is no time to wait for evidence; or the evidence may not relate to the problem, or nobody knows what the evidence really means. We need to listen, understand, and act, identifying our options and addressing implementation considerations.

Universities build the knowledge and human capital for better preparedness and response to natural disasters. They need to be champions and play a pivotal role in this arena. They can develop rapid response units to ask people what they need. Universities excel at research, so they should work to use research findings effectively. Field staff can ask questions for researchers to answer by first consulting the locals and then using evidence—but first, they must understand the research findings. Therefore, universities need to conduct research on how to make research understandable, get viewpoints, and look at implementation options in collaborative settings—*not in a silo*.

Universities can create *one-stop shopping* for research evidence (e.g., Health, Safety & Environment Worldwide / HSE International, based in Canada; Evidence Aid, based in the UK). They can conduct *stakeholder dialogues*, providing evidence briefs. They are specialists at organizing *training workshops* to help decision-makers dealing with natural disasters better understand research findings. Finally, they can innovate by creating a *Rapid Response Unit* housed their academic institution to link decision-makers working in natural disasters with top-notch researchers (e.g., economists, qualitative and quantitative researchers, social scientists, etc.) and relevant NGOs. This creates a “win-win” situation.

Thus, the role of universities role might involve

1. *Getting organizations to understand the research:* People are not trained to understand and apply research to their own contexts and need specially tailored, context-specific knowledge translation that fits their needs.
2. *Deliberative dialogue* works with chronic problems but not with acute crises.
3. *Rapid response units should be based in academic institutions* as well as in NGOs, fostering collaboration and learning among organizations, facilitating *diversity of thought*, and collaborating to directly support field practices.
4. *Making actionable recommendations and inviting reactions* from willing parties, so that their universities can become champions for capacity-building and critical thinking.
5. *Positioning their universities internationally* (e.g., McMaster has become a global reference center thanks to this). Brazil could fill a gap by providing reference centers for LAC and Portuguese-speaking countries. Universities have the capacity to provide global leadership in how to address natural disasters.

**Dr. Alex Camacho Vascónez, Regional Advisor, Department of Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief, PAHO/WHO**

Presentation: Annex VII

In 2017, the scenario for disasters in the Region included three major hurricanes, two major earthquakes, floods in Peru, and mudslides in Colombia—with great human and economic losses. The Americas ranks second place globally in disaster frequency. It suffers less in terms of death but more in terms of economic losses.

The response to emergencies and disasters is a public health matter and thus the responsibility of public health professionals. They must be prepared to reduce risks and provide an effective, efficient response to save lives, reduce suffering, and accelerate recovery. The health sector is always working to improve its response.

What is the role of academia? How can universities measure the risk of impact from disasters? This greatly depends on the level of preparedness; indeed, there is a direct correlation. The levels of responsibilities are often lost in the shuffle, focusing on leaders and policies but not on technicians and operational support. Currently, there are efforts to address competencies needed versus learning objectives; i.e., what to do when. Regarding objectives and competencies, *what we want the students to learn* and *how we can be sure they know it*?

Disaster reduction currently focuses on four priorities: (1) the health sector’s recognizing disaster risk; (2) its governance of disaster risk management (DRM); (3) safe and smart hospitals; and (4) health sector capacity for emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. In the health sector, training health workers contributes to disaster risk reduction. *Evaluation of disaster risk* leads to understanding the health sector’s capacity. Using techno-scientific information for evidence-based interventions is vital.

Given universities’ skill in conducting research and training, there is now emphasis on their role during sudden events, for there is no time to think during the chaos. Thinking has to have taken place beforehand.

PAHO’s disaster programs and research are based on real needs, and—whenever possible—on evidence, following a community-based, multi-hazard approach. Research is currently being conducted on the recovery phase. There is an urgent need to build competencies in this area and to address post-disaster considerations.

**Mr. Raúl Salguero, President, Latin American and Caribbean University Network for Disaster Risk Reduction (ReduLAC/RRD), Guatemala (virtual transmission from Cuba)**

Presentation: Annex VIII

Mr. Salguero is an expert on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and clarified his role as President of ReduLAC/RRD, a Central American high-level council. In his current post, he would like to see experts share results and universities play a role in building preparedness.

ReduLAC’s background and experience in this area began in 2007, with a joint applied research program with Sweden on disaster risk and assessment. It also addressed hazards of a more complex political, social, and ecological nature. The program awarded 12 PhD-level grants for DRR studies. In 2009, ReduLAC conducted a project on *Natural Hazard Analysis in Central America*.

An agreement with the Central American Universities High Council (CSUCA) was to play a pivotal role, providing goodwill to generate a response from national universities and the risk reduction system that works with them. Together with the OAS, CSUCA provides scholarships.<sup>15</sup> It also has a training center, within the framework of the *Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management* (PCGIR).

Both North America and Central America are prone to volcanic risks exacerbated by social conditions. 2012 marks a major milestone in terms of using and implementing DRR strategies, thanks to contributions made by universities. The *University Program for Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation to Climate Change in Central America* (PRIDCA), funded by Swiss Cooperation, operates along these lines. Under the PRIDCA umbrella, research projects<sup>16</sup> at ongoing at universities in Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama, with Internet presence on YouTube and Facebook, etc.

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<sup>15</sup> For more information, see [http://www.csuca.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=114&Itemid=133&lang=es](http://www.csuca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=114&Itemid=133&lang=es).

<sup>16</sup> For more information, see <http://pridca.csuca.org/index.php/proyectos/investigacion>.

PRIDCA’s consultative processes have produced an executive document on what universities can do. Results are concentrated in four main areas:

1. *Curricula*: Six universities have included DRM within their policies. Another 50 university curricula (47 undergraduate and 3 postgraduate) were incorporated into 16 universities in seven countries. A *Central American Policy for DRR*<sup>17</sup> was also developed.
2. *Applied research*: Some 17 research projects on DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA) were conducted in priority areas, including transboundary basins, with three inter-university projects. Priority themes included Climate Modeling, Early Warning Systems, Volcanic Risk, etc.
3. *Extension for knowledge/ technology transfer*: Ten universities implemented 14 joint research and extension projects in 37 communities in six countries, benefiting a total of 3,647 men and 4,084 women.
4. *Safe Universities*: Seven universities in seven countries developed actions to reduce campus vulnerability. Priority topics included vulnerability diagnosis, risk maps, emergency plans, training, facility adaptation, acquiring response and signaling equipment, conducting simulations, forming commissions, etc.

Like PRIDCA, the program on *Institutionalization of Disaster Risk Reduction in Higher Education Institutions* (IESLAC) with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) aims to involve universities. Focal areas are

- a. *Curricula*: Training 25 high-level officials to develop institutional RR capacities and incorporate the DRR agenda.
- b. *Applied research*: Seven applied research projects have been conducted in such areas as seismic risk, landslides, susceptibility, vulnerability, and risk perception, among others.
- c. *Safe universities*: Assessing the level of safety and resilience to disasters in universities using the University Infrastructural Safety Index (*Índice de Seguridad en Infraestructura Universitaria* / ISIU), by evaluating 16 university facilities in six countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, and Peru). DRR Centers were created in universities, purchasing the necessary office equipment and software and conducting training for university officials and staff.

Disasters do not respect political boundaries. Academia should serve as a model by providing training in DRR to high-level officials to implement in their universities. The Hospital Safety Index is yet another topic.

Universities have become embedded in mainstream disaster management (DM). How many have taken on this role? How many have become involved and internalized it, and how? All this remains a question for further study.

## Plenary Discussion

- There was a general consensus that all parties need to work together to respond correctly so that the health system can recover from disasters. The need is there. The facilities and knowledge exist. Universities should reach out to communities before, during, and after disasters. They have protocols and know that this kind of support can mitigate such emergencies. They need to reach out to help others.
- For the OAS, one of the challenges is articulating different pre-existing initiatives so that they can connect and exchange. There should be a stable arrangement with countries on what universities can offer. OAS structures could then be utilized to relate to universities. The OAS offers a platform, the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (RIMD), where governments and can exchange needs and offers, either standing or emergency; but it needs to include universities more. The structure exists but must remain dynamic by actively sharing information.
- Disaster preparedness needs to be mainstreamed. University outreach can improve this area. People must understand the risk and prepare themselves, starting as early as possible in schools. A USAID project in St. Vincent and the Grenadines developed a disaster preparedness program for primary schools. All community members need to be on the same wave length to increase resilience and decrease vulnerability. The system needs to develop a culture of resilience, and a university alliance could play a positive role in the Caribbean and elsewhere in accomplishing this. They could learn the needs of the communities and tap into community resources and philanthropy. This has global potential.
- It is essential that countries have affordable, solidly built dwellings and safe homes. This contributes to more resilient communities. Can university extension play a role here?

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<sup>17</sup> Available at: <http://www.pridca.csuca.org/images/PUCARRD/PUCARRD.pdf>.

- It is also the role of academia to look at meeting the needs of non-priority groups—e.g. people with disabilities, older adults, etc.—who are most vulnerable during disasters.
- During an emergency, all response must be based on both evidence and experience. The evidence they use must come from national authorities, together with universities, at different levels and sectors of response. Countries need to develop protocols. Universities can do this by having their staff develop pre-approved protocols with ethical approval to be ready once disaster strikes; for afterwards, it is too late.
- CSUCA promotes university cooperation and extension, with supervised studies conducted in communities as a graduation requirement. Project planning and budgets should reflect strategic policies.
- Universities should be included in DRR. At present, governments exclude them.
- Disaster issues are not limited to universities. The Scholarships Program has developed several components within universities, comprehensively merging two programs for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Emergency healthcare is part of this, because health facilities are the first places people go during a disaster. Any viable plan must follow a people-centered approach involving all the actors in the process so that they know how to focus on first-level primary care during disasters.
- There is a whole body of evidence available on disaster management, but the language barrier plays a role in its effectiveness. We need one-stop shopping, with tools available in multiple languages.
- Mental health and psychosocial trauma are other topics involving community resilience, which especially affect the Caribbean islands. There has been much concern on placing greater focus on this issue. Disasters can generate collective mental health crises, e.g., the earthquake in Ecuador. During Hurricane Ida in Grenada, it was clear that experts had just begun to deal with post-disaster mental health issues. Funding—from governments, NGOs, and donors—is needed for programs. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has been instrumental in working with students through their *Return to Happiness* program,<sup>18</sup> which deals with psychosocial recovery through a multilateral training initiative. The virtual Open Campus<sup>19</sup> of the University of the West Indies (UWI) facilitates a vital network for both short- and long-term disaster mitigation and management. All existing structures should be used to disseminate information on all aspects of disasters. Given that the structures and facilities exist, they only need synergies to implement the necessary initiatives. Also, countries should take advantage of OAS scholarships in the area of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Any knowledge gained and exchange of experiences would certainly benefit the care provided to those who survive disasters. Currently, this is not part of the curriculum for disasters, making training a necessity.
- Canada—together with McGill University, McMaster University, NGOs, and post-epidemic inpatient care providers—works with both health economists and policy-makers. For capacity-building, McMaster is fortunate in that it has qualified staff. Canada has tapped into community resources and has developed a management-level course for rebuilding communities.
- Environmental protection is a concern. Have universities developed training geared towards coastal ecological systems and resilient water systems? How can they organize such training, predict events, and apply strategies when needs arise? How can they share knowledge and make it available to all? The focus to date has been on graduates; but training DR professionals is also important, and universities can do this.
- Universities should be included in relevant factors *vis-à-vis* disasters: speed of onset, etc. Salient issues include exposed vulnerabilities, land use, cultural aspects, natural resources, natural hazards, and vulnerable systems—knowledge that is part of universities’ intellectual capital.
- The University of Brasília UnB has a seismological and tropical disease center. Their work could enhance programs through their experiences and government alliances. A prospective common program would allow universities go out into the field and conduct research, so that governments can formulate evidence-based policies. UnB has very strong research groups in DRR but must develop a corps of Brazilian researchers in other areas of disaster management, thus providing opportunities to follow up on the above goals.
- UnB also has a video partnership program involving the OAS, PAHO, and Brazil to offer scholarships in Brazilian universities to students from 34 Member States for both formal education and human resource training, to the benefit of many countries. Brazil offers stipends for master’s-level students, which liberates them to learn. The universities teach the students Portuguese. This kind of bilateral cooperation offers benefits for progress, sharing cultural and democratic values that enhances life for all citizens.
- Green establishments, though costly, are vital.

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<sup>18</sup> For more information, see [https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/paraguay\\_23016.html](https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/paraguay_23016.html).

<sup>19</sup> Available from: <http://www.open.uwi.edu/>.

## Round Table 2: Challenges and Potential Solutions to Attract Students from CARICOM Countries to Educational Cooperation Programs in Latin America

Moderator: Ms. Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, OAS  
Session Video: <https://paho.webex.com/paho/ldr.php?RCID=4c62ce68fd90f4be17ec585494ad68f9>

The moderator, Ms. Osborne from OAS, praised the distinguished panel and its mix of nationalities from Dominica, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Brazil. She stated the session’s objective as one of involving students from countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the Scholarship Program.

### Ambassador Lou-Anne Gaylene Gilchrist, Permanent Representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS

The Ambassador acknowledged her CARICOM colleagues present at the meeting. If the Program wishes to attract Caribbean students to educational programs in Latin America, it must face some of the distinct realities of the Caribbean subregion. The Caribbean has an extremely diverse population of 90 million people of many different national and ethnic origins, making it extremely heterogeneous. Geographically, it includes many small island states (SISs) as well as larger islands and sections of the mainland.

CARICOM’s *Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy*<sup>20</sup> places its focus on education in the subregion. CARICOM has achieved nearly universal access to primary and secondary education, with 16% of graduates enrolled in tertiary education in various community colleges, with some university costs. For the students, this means lower costs but less time spent overseas. Almost all CARICOM countries have a university. UWI has branches in several countries, and Grenada has St. George’s University. However, higher education is costly and thus inaccessible to many. Most, if not all, countries offer scholarships to their best students, plus government student loan programs for low-income or disadvantaged students. Bilateral programs offer scholarships. The overall strategy is aimed at inclusion and equity by promoting access to quality HE.

The strategy nonetheless faces challenges. Government expenditures on education are favorable compared to countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Small island states (SISs) spend 6–7% of their gross domestic product (GDP)—a sizeable commitment—on education and training.

Growth in the subregion is slow, and productivity is low in some sectors. The CARICOM Development Bank attributes this to reflecting its vulnerability, resulting in resource constraints. Economic conditions also have an impact. Education is only part of the investments made by government, with impacts on job opportunities felt at all levels of the educational system. Many factors interplay here—human development, access, equity—and mostly affect the poor. However, the Scholarship Program offers opportunities.

Back in 2010, the OAS was offering scholarships for HE at all levels. From 2014–2017, 746 scholarships were awarded, mostly in 2015. In the Caribbean, students from Jamaica, Haiti, and Belize were the primary recipients, with fewer from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, and the Dominican Republic; but this reflects no pattern, due to annual variance. Out of 536 applicants, 245 received scholarships, or 45%. These figures indicate neither the number of offers nor the gender of recipients. Currently, 124 Caribbean students receive Coimbra scholarships. Most are from Haiti (67%). Socioeconomic structures make for gaps among nationals.

Attracting students from the Caribbean is a challenge, for the following reasons:

1. *The language barrier:* There is little access to learning Portuguese in most CARICOM countries. This prevents students from applying to the Program. Study in Brazil requires an advanced or at least intermediate proficiency level in Portuguese. Students feel set up for failure without this.
  - ✓ To tackle this deterrent long-term, there must be a policy in place to include Portuguese among the languages offered in schools. This means teaching teachers and training and certifying them to teach Portuguese to others in CARICOM countries. There could be a teacher exchange for total immersion.
  - ✓ A short-term solution would be to audit training priorities for language courses. The proficiency level could be lowered to intermediate, followed by intensive training for Caribbean scholarship recipients upon arrival in Brazil. To induce Caribbean students to apply, the Program needs to provide such an offer.
2. CARICOM must set the same international standard as UWI, where qualifications have international portability. Countries should adopt this by providing seamless pathways and matriculation as much as

<sup>20</sup> Available from: <https://caricom.org/Document-Library/view-document/caricom-human-resource-development-strategy>.

possible, developing systems for credit transfer among countries. This would encourage applications. There should be reciprocal arrangements made to facilitate student exchange.

3. CARICOM is aware of the importance of accreditation in a globalized world. Positive steps should be taken to establish student and teacher exchange agreements with OAS, to expand cultural contact with Brazil that could then promote progress in the Caribbean.
4. Full scholarships need to be provided to cover all costs—for students cannot afford them. Public-private partnerships should step in to fill this gap.

Public health remains a serious concern in LAC, with persistent risks. The Caribbean must become more competitive with more sustainable systems. LAC is the world’s most inequitable region, with “haves and have-nots.”

### **Dr. William Adu-Krow, PAHO/WHO Representative in Guyana**

Presentation: Annex IX; Video: [https://youtu.be/4lnZh63\\_BE](https://youtu.be/4lnZh63_BE)

Dr. Adu-Krow thanked the organizers for holding the event in English, asking no absolution for not having learned Spanish or Portuguese—despite working at PAHO. For many Guyanese, one’s first language is indigenous, followed by Portuguese and English. University classes are in English.

What would be the best way to attract CARICOM students to scholarships in Brazil? One, the Program requires clear goals that target country needs: e.g., Guyana needs neurosurgeons, having some Cubans but none of its own. Two, the country needs to promote and facilitate academic credit transfer among countries. Three, education needs connections to the labor market to help place students in appropriate jobs.

What are the constraints? Guyana has only two medical schools, with fewer schools meaning fewer opportunities. In LAC, there is a lack of course offerings in English. Most students also face financial constraints. The country lacks awareness of educational and research capacity, as well as OAS scholarship schemes. Finally, the scholarships cover most but not all costs for study abroad—and cost is always a factor.

What are possible solutions? Countries could establish a strategic exchange program for professionals and students. To facilitate internationalization, the educational system should encourage multilingualism from early on. Countries and universities could explore potential partnerships, broadcasting opportunities available in the Region.

PAHO and OAS have successfully collaborated with Guyana, facilitating the first Guyanese oncologist, who graduated from the Brazil’s Federal University of Pará. How can countries avail themselves of opportunities to boost student capacity? It is crucial to ensure availability to online courses that meet national needs; set up contractual bonding schemes for students to return to their home country and thus plug the ‘brain drain;’ continue government funding to pay recipients’ salary while in training; and provide the requisite employment once scholarship recipients return, with a guaranteed job that utilizes their newly acquired skills—with no underutilization.

PAHO and OAS jointly cover costs: health insurance, books, settling-in allowance, stipend, one-time round-trip airfare, and language courses. First-year funds are paid out; but for year two, their receipt is based on student performance, lack of which will result in expulsion. A report from both institutions and student upon termination of studies is mandatory and vital for assessing how the Program has benefited both parties.

Guyana currently collaborates with the Preto College of Nursing at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. OAS, PAHO, and the university share responsibilities. Through these collective efforts, things are happening.

### **Dr. Gustavo Barbosa, Secretary, Division for International Educational Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE/DCE), Brazil**

Presentation: Annex X

Brazil wants to promote academic mobility through the Scholarships Program, with Coimbra focusing on the Caribbean countries this year. Two Brazilian government scholarship programs are underutilized in the Caribbean: PEC-G for undergraduates (*Programa de Estudantes-Convênio de Graduação*) and PEC-PG for graduate/postgraduate students (*Programa de Estudantes-Convênio de Pós-Graduação*), respectively operating for 54 and 37 years.

PEC-G is available to any country that has a signed agreement with Brazil, with no quotas or admissions exams; but the government must participate in the setup. The program is managed by the MRE/DCE and the Secretariat for Higher Education of the Ministry of Education (MEC/SESu). The two ministries share costs with the universities. Tuition is always free. The website is multilingual.

There are three kinds of scholarships: merit, financial need, and emergency grants. The goal is to make Brazilian universities available to foreign students. The application criteria and selection process are rigorous. Nonetheless, two obstacles hinder applications: the language barrier and costs. A further obstacle is placement in employment in one's home country for returning students, since the Program requires them to go back upon completion of their studies to promote development there.

Regarding language, the MEC has developed a Certificate of Proficiency in Brazilian Portuguese, CELPE-Bras, for students to take outside Brazil. Only three Caribbean countries have examination centers; but language should not be seen as an insurmountable barrier. Teach-the-teacher programs would be a good start.

Regarding costs, sponsors and cost-sharing schemes are needed. Though tuition is free, the Brazilian government does not cover living costs and transportation. OAS and PAHO currently share these costs for students from the Americas; and in Africa, Gabon, Cape Verde, Nigeria, and Angola offer scholarships to cover them.

Currently, 60 countries are participating in the Scholarships Program, nine from the Caribbean with agreements in force (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago) and six with agreements pending (Belize, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines). Yet Caribbean students comprise only 7% of PEC-G students.

For postgraduate students in master's or PhD programs, Brazil offers the PEC-PG, managed by MRE/DCE and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Innovations and Communications (MCTIC). It offers paid tuition plus stipends and airfare, but graduates must return to their home country after graduation. To date, PEC-PG has awarded 3,000 scholarships; but from 2000-2017, only 198 went to the Caribbean.

In conclusion, both the PEC-G and the PEC-PG programs offer free training in some of the finest universities in LAC. Brazil would like to attract more students from the Caribbean.

**Dr. Luis Alejandro Salicrup, Senior Advisor for Global Health Research, National Cancer Institute, United States National Institutes of Health (NIH/NCI), PAHO/WHO**

Presentation: Annex XI

The goal of this meeting is to strengthen health research capacity, and Coimbra has excellent programs. Dr. Salicrup commended the panel for having promoted the Scholarships Program. It represents a great opportunity for Caribbean students to attend some of the best universities in LAC.

Dr. Salicrup's secondment at PAHO from NIH/NIC involves global work, with the NIH budget amounting US\$ 34 billion. NIH offers fellowships in the CARICOM countries and for other language groups in the subregion. Dr. Salicrup himself was the recipient of an OAS scholarship for field work in Chile.

There is plenty of work to be done in the Caribbean and challenges to be faced. Five steps to improve health system performance might entail the following:

1. Implementing PAHO's *Policy on Research for Health* and WHO's *Strategy for Research for Health*
2. Translating evidence into policy, practice, and products
3. Managing and coordinating WHO Collaborating Centers, which have a special role to play
4. Producing, managing, publishing, and disseminating reliable scientific information
5. Articulating ethical evidence-informed policies, plans, and programs

PAHO's *Report on Strengthening Research Capacities for Health in the Caribbean, 2007-2017*<sup>2</sup> provides examples of Caribbean participation in training offers, e.g. *Effective Project Planning and Evaluation for Biomedical and Health Research* (EPPE) at Colombia's International Center for Training and Medical Research (CIDEIM). Some 136 professionals from nine countries received training at CIDEIM, UWI, and St. George's University in Grenada

(SGU), with two grant-writing and administrative workshops held last year. PAHO has now joined forces with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and increased collaboration with SGU. During training, participants provide a concept proposal, undergo peer review, critique each other, and present their critiqued concept papers. Thus, far, this approach has been successful. Current opportunities include the areas of research governance, quality, human resources for research, and partnerships.

Health has no room for mediocrity. In the Caribbean, there are more partnerships with the outside than within. More subregional cooperation is needed, especially to deal with chronic and vector-borne disease epidemics. Inter-ministerial communication is crucial. Countries moving forward competitively all engage in this.

Over the past 10 years in the Caribbean, 374 health professionals from 19 CARICOM countries have received training scholarships, ranging from project planning and management, grant-writing, systematic review, and research ethics. Research has been integrated into national health systems and disease control plans.

The OAS-PAHO Scholarships have great potential, but there are still challenges. To further promote them,

1. Language should not be an excuse; offers exist. A crash course in Brazil would be advantageous.
2. Support is necessary to promote international mobility in the Caribbean.
3. Countries need to take responsibility for reinserting returning graduates into academia or qualified jobs, for the scholarships aim promote development in one's native land. Reentry grants would help with the costs of moving back; placement in an appropriate job would promote utilization of newly earned skills.

## Plenary Discussion

- The most salient issue concerned the *language barrier* posed by Caribbean students studying in Brazil. There was a consensus that the language issue needs to be resolved to promote the Program.
  - ✓ For an immediate solution, Coimbra and the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have kindly offered to take over this function, noting the greater efficiency of total immersion in Brazil and the gap created by Caribbean students graduating in May while the Brazilian school years starts in March. Students could invest this gap in learning Portuguese in the interim, given that short courses are available.
  - ✓ In the short term, Brazilian universities are autonomous and can negotiate their own agreements, given their different strategies for offering different types of language courses online, abroad, etc. Brazil would pay for the courses to promote Caribbean participation, but the countries might have to work out a living allowance to cover this period. Certainly, the cost-benefit ratio favors such an investment.
  - ✓ In the medium term, the Caribbean could send teachers to Brazil to attain proficiency. Sustainable schemes might mean setting up a teacher exchange. Once the teachers complete their course, they could go home and teach their colleagues in a ‘teach-the-teachers’ scheme.
  - ✓ In the long term, countries would have to adjust their curricula to accommodate foreign language learning from early on—and not just European languages. Internationalization could thus be jump-started in primary and secondary schools. Anyone studying abroad has to deal with language.
- The scholarships are even more vital for disadvantaged and older students. Age limits should be flexible.
- The Program needs more outreach to raise awareness: campaigns, Facebook pages, public announcements, etc.—i.e., mass social communication. OAS needs to conduct a roadshow in the Caribbean to obtain feedback on national nuances, local needs, and labor markets to help recruit students more successfully. There are different reasons why students participate in scholarship programs or not. Rethinking this aspect as it relates to joint programs is essential: what are the students looking for?
- All ministries of education, communities, and families see education as the pillar of development and have worked to enhance education. There is strong political will in the Caribbean for this. Once the main issues are ironed out, the Scholarships Program should be well received.
- Two other salient issues involve *reentry* and *bonding*. Reentry is mandatory, since students must return to their home country upon completing their studies, so that they can contribute to national/local development. However, the lack of job opportunities—especially in small island states (SISs)—is a deterrent. Human resources remain a critical issue, with much underutilization of present capacities. Opportunities exist for collaborative research, but local partnerships are crucial. One solution might involve reentry grants, with the government and local universities taking on the role of placing the new graduate in an appropriate post utilizing her/his skills. The new graduate would have signed a binding

agreement to remain in his/her country for a specific period. All this would guarantee that the country benefits from the newly acquired skills and help eliminate “brain drain.”

- Brazil’s University of São Paulo (USP’s) Preto College of Nursing has a cost-sharing scheme with the government—with support from the Ministry of Health, PAHO, and USP—that has helped eight master’s and two doctoral students obtain scholarships. Brazilian universities first screen the students, a good practice involving university staff and motivating them to do more, with positive results. Given the ambassador’s role to promote and push the Program, their presence here is a plus. Ministerial cooperation is essential. The Program works because everybody works together and makes things happen.
- Links to country needs cannot be overemphasized. Strategic plans need to address human resource needs and facilitate *a priori* language proficiency. The Program needs to publicize its existence to students and professors. Also important is to ensure employment for graduates: currently, there are no job guarantees. Bonding and employment schemes are a must. Government responsibility is crucial, with communication for effective partnership. PAHO collaboration has a lot to offer. There is plenty of food for thought.
- All participants identified with internationalization and support its promotion. Myriad other modalities include transfers, dual-degree programs, and research internships at master’s or doctoral level; mobility can be full or partial. OAS is holding talks to increase coordination between Mexican and Brazilian programs. The English-speaking Caribbean has long-standing sandwich programs for sharing with other countries.
- Universities must acknowledge both the challenges and potential solutions: many factors require many solutions. Historically, studying abroad has involved Canada and Europe. Looking around the Region shows students going overseas, which is positive. Doing this requires a world view open to solving problems in different regions and in one’s own. This mindset will create the kind of programs needed.
- Canada has many inter-American initiatives and sees international education is a driver for both prosperity and the labor market. It has developed an international education strategy to strengthen engagement with partners, involving either partial or short-term mobility. For Canada and other countries, “brain drain” remains the “elephant in the room,” despite the desire to open opportunities. Canada has a program with LAC providing 650 short-term scholarships lasting several months. Canada’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a history of working with the Caribbean; of the 5,000 LAC students studying in Canada since 2009 (with an investment of US\$ 500 million per year), proficiency in English gives CARICOM students a decisive edge. Collaboration initiatives/missions exist to establish networking among academic institutions for direct collaboration, research, and faculty mobility. *Emerging Leaders in the Americas* (ELAP) is a joint Canada-CARICOM program where foreign students approach the university for a partnership, followed by the university applying for their student to go to Canada (September is this year’s deadline). Such practical schemes jump-start student mobility. More are needed.
- Guyana has technical cooperation for health in all areas but must utilize it for human resource capacity-building. The government is not averse to complementing resources, as it reduces long-term costs. Guyana has learned from the Caribbean and the United Kingdom (UK) but needs to collate and broadcast existing opportunities to its own people. It must train all its human resources to access educational services and put strategies and policies into place to enable this; negotiations with the OAS this week should produce positive outcomes.
- Reduced interest in producing master’s and PhD programs is a worrisome issue preventing students from staying in LAC. Another challenge is that many young people have no desire to pursue a PhD. Science is the road to competitiveness, a must in today’s world, which calls for flexible programs to face new challenges.
- Emphasis is needed on governance and champions. The leaders present at this meeting can tackle neglected diseases and disasters with innovative ideas and opportunities. PAHO faces a challenge in developing human capacities—essential for bridging gaps created by poverty and underdevelopment. People should champion their own programs. The Scholarships Program offers training at some of the best universities in the Region, for a great opportunity. The Americas’ champions must all join forces to disseminate Program information.
- Resolving this problem will not be easy for the OAS. Challenges require in-depth study and road trips to the Caribbean to achieve success. There are supply and demand dysfunctions, transition issues, and bonding issues—with no clear vision or strategy to address them. Human resource development must be country driven. How can these opportunities be taken up? We need the Caribbean islands to develop a broader and more positive concept of other countries. Then we can find solutions.

Thus, ended Day 1 at the OAS. The venue for Day 2 will move to PAHO.

Day 2, Tuesday, 27 February 2018

## Welcome Remarks

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Session Video of Welcome Remarks, Round Table 3, and Discussions:  
<https://paho.webex.com/paho/jdr.php?RCID=118bd220bea8e71d3ab3798c3af9dc14>

### Dr. Francisco Becerra Posada, Assistant Director, PAHO/WHO

Dr. Becerra welcomed participants to the *house of health of the Americas*. Predating WHO with a history of promoting health in the Americas, PAHO is the secretariat that carries out its Member States' wishes regarding health.

Currently, research and innovation are important directives, with visible results. Polio has been eradicated in the Americas. Immunization has advanced health. Smallpox has been eradicated and other diseases like Chagas can now be controlled. Ciro de Quadros was an exemplary Brazilian and PAHO Public Health Hero who utilized research to find suitable strategies to combat polio in varied settings, helping make the Americas polio free for over 25 years. Cuba was the forerunner in combatting AIDS and blocked mother-to-child transmission, making today's view see AIDS as a chronic and not an infectious disease. Together, we can work to find solutions. In almost every case, we find that developing and adapting solutions resulted from bringing together brilliant minds with different knowledge and perspectives, with backup from academia.

How can universities contribute to building human capital in emergency situations? Academia can play a major role with innovations that enhance what PAHO does. That knowledge equips us to do a better job. We are keen to increase the influence of universities and promote the development and use of quality research to improve health with equity, and to help countries achieve and maintain the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yesterday's dialogue discussed, among other things, how universities can support building the necessary human capital to address health emergencies, using the best possible knowledge, and how to address the shortage of human resources for health and research in the CARICOM Countries. We look forward to today's deliberations on the role of universities in preventing, controlling, and eliminating tropical diseases, advancing cooperation, and setting standards for academic degrees in the Americas.

## Round Table 3: Role of Universities in the Prevention, Control and Elimination of Tropical Diseases in the Caribbean

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### Dr. Jenifer Saffi, Pro-Rector, Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre (UFCSPA)

Dr. Saffi affirmed the importance of health, adding that her university has a huge hospital with a fine team ready to work with PAHO and the Scholarships Program. She acknowledged the one billion people in 149 countries who contribute to the fight against infectious diseases.

### Dr. Freddy Pérez, Advisor, Communicable Disease and Environmental Determinants of Health Department, PAHO/WHO

Dr. Pérez based his enthusiasm for the topic on two reasons. One is the developing role universities play in fighting tropical diseases. Two, before coming to PAHO, he personally worked mainly in academia to combat infectious diseases in Africa.

Infectious disease continues to be a major burden in the Americas; and the resulting morbidity, mortality, and disability are often not included in collected data. Despite efforts made in the Americas, there is a need for capacity-building for health research. Upscaling chemical prophylaxis comes from research and then goes on to implementation. What factors drive universities' potential to move forward? The first is data on these diseases; and the second, implementation that can lead to elimination. Universities are a living laboratory for this.

Universities' role mainly focuses on diagnostics, vaccines, and medicines—all of which require further research. Then scientists work to convert findings into tools and insert them into the health system, namely through implementation research. Many tropical diseases—e.g., dengue—need more work in diagnostics before using tools.

Another issue to highlight is research partnerships. The University of Bordeaux has public-private partnerships to foster research. Field implementation is also a must. How do universities provide input for evidence-based policy? How can universities identify timely issues at stake and turn them into policy issues for controlled prevention?

How do universities work with and involve the public sector? Often, this is vertical: trial, data, documenting. How can universities play a role in integrating science into the public sector? How can they link with policy-makers? Universities must work with the government to induce policy-makers to use their data, four main issues involve (1) funding for tropical disease research; (2) intellectual property barriers; (3) faculty involvement in tropical diseases; and (4) setting national research priorities at the universities.

All this is coupled with a trio of more salient issues. The first involves training. Universities can train health workers at many levels. What role should universities and PAHO play in developing curricula for global health, policy issues, etc.? Networks should focus on what needs doing for global health: tropical disease research, strengthening master's-level courses, and partnerships. OAS, PAHO, the countries, and the universities constitute a network consortium for global health and partnership. Universities need to validate global health as an academic field and involve themselves in sharing. The second issue involves career paths; students need field work and a clear career path, with more resources allocated for research and training. Third, knowledge must be translated into policy.

#### Dr. William Adu-Krow, PAHO/WHO Representative in Guyana

Dr. Abu-Krow focused on control and elimination issues in the country context of Guyana and on the role universities can play in fighting these diseases. Guyana country is dealing with 17 diseases, with six main foci:

1. *Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)*: Guyana has achieved some level of control and management but should not lose its momentum, with new cases still appearing. It needs to develop vaccines, management strategies, and treatments. Universities can help end this epidemic through monitoring and research.
2. *Tuberculosis (TB)*: Guyana has a control plan to strengthen case management and prevent resistance, though obtaining costly medicines is a challenge. The country needs to manage information aimed at decision-making. Universities can help with effective treatment and research to optimize implementation and prevent resistance.
3. *Vector-borne diseases (VBDs)*: Guyana has a control plan for dengue, chikungunya, and Zika. Universities collaborate with other actors to train human resources sustainably: e.g., Guyana with Venezuela and Brazil.
4. *Neglected diseases*: The country will not be able to control and eliminate these diseases, “diseases of the poor,” by 2020. With Guyana’s achievement rates varying from 40.5% to 65%, a more feasible objective would be to achieve an annual increase of 5%. Guyana needs to reach 85% and time is running out, though the country hopes to achieve it by 2027. This was accomplished with measles, which is now so unrecognizable that the country has had to increase the index of suspicion. Some NDs are disappearing, or doctors have never seen them (e.g., leishmaniasis and leprosy). Universities can help develop modalities for micro-planning.
5. *Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)*: The last 20 years have seen no new antibiotics. The country needs to set engagement, prevention, access, and implementation targets. Universities understand the situation and can train accordingly. Integrated prevention means having everybody on board.
6. *Emergencies*: In the Caribbean and Guyana, these currently cannot be monitored effectively for detection and risk assessment. Universities can link with French Guiana and Brazil, as their involvement is crucial.

#### Plenary Discussion

- Participants saw research and training as primary issues. There is plenty of data but not enough work in diagnostics and vaccines. More engagement and networking is needed, involving our best experts in these fields. How to best pass this knowledge on to the community, policy-makers, stakeholders, etc.?
- Participants agreed that research translation is crucial but also possible. Community and family involvement is also important. Involving universities presents opportunities. One is the Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH), with many contributions from the younger generation but fewer from LAC and more from Africa and Asia. At last year’s meeting of the CUGH, nobody knew about the Brazilian scholarships. Coimbra needs a presence there. Involvement with other consortia can help share multidisciplinary knowledge. In Europe, the [tropEd](http://www.troped.org) network<sup>21</sup> is worth exploring.

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<sup>21</sup> Available at: <http://www.troped.org>.

- The six examples of diseases were helpful, but all 17 diseases are approached vertically when a horizontal approach is needed. Starting with the role of universities could lead to knowledge transfer and community health. Brazil has a large group devoted to TB. We should force our governments to fund work to build research and institutional capacity. Coimbra might help here. Universities should be active on boards.
- The pro-rector of a small Brazilian university near Paraguay spoke of the many nationalities and indigenous peoples there. Since 2015, the university has increased its community outreach to meet demand. They have had two extension programs in health for indigenous communities, fighting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and promoting policies to combat disease among indigenous groups in a culturally appropriate way. The university is enthusiastic about this and seeks to improve their quality of life. There is strong network collaboration. PAHO offers internships that pay tuition through grants to indigenous communities that, in turn, pay the student's costs.
- Most university professors do not reach out to the community but remain in their ivory tower. Laboratory issues predominate, while community outreach and field work are not a priority; and faculty engages in no dialogue with real demand. Urging researchers to go out into their communities has met with little success. Research will have a reduced impact if not combined with outreach.
- One participant stated that many Canadian universities gravitate towards global health, though student competitiveness is an issue. Another disagreed, citing a global health program in France that was quite competitive, with a European tropical medicine network. Canadian universities need to connect to community needs, like PAHO is connected to the countries. Canada needs to link research with policy. Its faculty cannot talk about tropical diseases and needs experts in this area to train its students.
- Why do students gravitate towards global health? Is it a second or third choice? Selective criteria exist, but what is the selection process? Students from backgrounds not linked to global health can greatly contribute. What criteria can help push for quality? International development partners must do more to promote global health as a viable career path, working with governments, donors, and universities, advocating linkages to academia.
- Online courses have been successful. Coimbra provides good example in its training offers. Brazil's open and distance education university system, the Open University of the Unified Health System (UNA-SUS) is part of a virtual health system to train community health workers, having trained some 2,000 thus far.
- For the two career tracks of global health versus international health, PAHO has its Virtual Public Health Campus (VPHC). PAHO and Brazil should compare notes. The Institute of Public Health of the University of Bordeaux (U-Bordeaux) in France had one of the first online master's in public health programs. Online and distance programs improve coverage at different levels.
- There is a need to acknowledge that universities must address time considerations in tutorials and optimize time efficiency. How can they follow up with student tutorials to maintain quality? LAC has many universities and online courses, but how effective are they *vis-à-vis* quality? Evaluation is crucial.
- Guyana has online education but needs more face to face; however, the main issue is infrastructure when technology fails. Refitting with the University of Miami created a special room for online courses.
- University involvement is essential for the Region. The Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) has a great group for tropical diseases, attracting students from as far away as Istanbul. Considering Coimbra's experience, UnB made a proposal for NIH, PAHO, Coimbra, and Brazilian universities to host an informal three-day seminar with the most qualified experts, assembling researchers to discuss joint projects for education and training. If the group agrees, UnB will organize meetings with representatives from these organizations and institutions. Should OAS agree, a second meeting could be held on science and technology. In closing, participants were in favor of this proposal and noted the need to get to work involving their institutions.

## Discussion: Differences and Similarities between Structures, Credit Validation, and Diplomas in Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral Programs—Overview of the Americas

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**Moderator: Dr. Maryse Roberts, Acting Director, Department of Human Development, Education and Employment, OAS**

Dr. Roberts focused on human resource and economic development. OAS wants to foster collaboration. It wants to know how Honduras organizes its different programs to promote collaboration with Brazilian universities.

**Dr. Marion A. Brevé Reyes, Rector, Central American Technological University (UniTec), Honduras**

Presentation: Annex XII

Global trends show increased enrollment in HE, from 139 million students in 2005 to 207 million in 2015—and 262 million by 2025. Growth has resulted from geographic expansion, new programs (VoTech and graduate studies), and new modalities (distance education, hybrid and online courses). Access rates to HE among 18–24-year-olds have increased, especially in Western Europe, LAC, China and India. Globally, more students are studying abroad, with number doubling from 2000 to 2003 (from two to four million); the number of students from LAC increased from 120,000 in 2000, to 207,000 in 2015, with 15% (31,000) studying in LAC. HE enrollment in LAC increased from 8.6 million in 2000 to 24 million in 2014. Brazil has over seven million students (30% of all LAC students). Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile have higher HE access rates than the rest of LAC; El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua have the lowest. As to the premise of “publish or perish,” Costa Rica reached the goal of 100 papers per year, while Honduras produced 105 papers in five years.

UNESCO lists the following challenges to HE: (1) Improving academic quality; (2) pursuing national and international accreditation; (3) increasing time efficiency; (4) linking vocational and technical (Vo-Tech) education to the labor market; (5) becoming balanced institutions; and (6) strengthening internationalization.

Dr. Brevé represented Central America, his purpose being to discuss internationalization of HE in Central America and provide an overview of approaches followed. He thanked the OAS, Coimbra, PAHO/WHO, and the Brazilian ministries for their efforts in this regard. There are 29,000 students at UniTec, second-highest ranking among the Honduran universities and first among the private universities according to the USA. The subregion has 215 universities, 80% of them private and 18% public, with over a million students. Coverage rates vary, with Costa Rica having the highest and showing the greatest growth with the expansion of private universities. Socioeconomic status plays a role, with Costa Rica and Panama showing the strongest economic growth.

In Honduras, expansion happens more among private universities. It offers a variety of modalities: virtual, face to face, and hybrid. Costs for face-to-face HE will continue to grow; but today’s world offers virtual reality and artificial intelligence (AI) for teaching and learning. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are cheap to implement, with demand rising. Sometimes they are free. Another modality, hybrid courses, continues to grow. In Central America, the trend is for short-term to one-year programs, with active promotion of internships in China, Europe, the USA, and LAC. More flexible dual/double degree programs involving studies abroad include a 2+2 transfer program in Honduras and a 3+1 in Spain. There are traditional full mobility programs in the USA, Europe, and LAC.

The emphasis on internationalization calls for bringing in international staff and sending students abroad. Two universities are now seeking international accreditation. The issue of accreditation is complicated, with differences and similarities. The European Union (EU) Credit Transfer System (ECTS) requires 30 hours of classroom time per credit. The Latin American Credit Reference (CLAR) requires anywhere from 24 to 33 hours. The Central American Higher Education Council (CSuCA) requires 45 hours. Brazil requires 15–22 hours of classroom theory and 30–40 hours of practice. There is a move towards setting international standards, despite each region having its own system. Yet the process is complex, with comparing and applying these systems difficult to implement.

*Vis-à-vis* internationalization, Central American students face the following challenges: economic limitations; lack of networks to promote student mobility programs; low effectiveness of university international program offices; and registrars’ offices misunderstanding different academic credit systems—but training registrars and directors in these systems would resolve that. Connections to networks like Coimbra would promote and increase student mobility. With their typical “millennials” international mindset, today’s students do pursue opportunities, preferably in economically strong countries. Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico are the most attractive destinations in LAC.

The Scholarships Program presents challenges and opportunities. It needs to recruit more poor, rural students. *Vis-à-vis* the language issue, most students know English and can pick up Portuguese quickly. The subregion needs stronger capacities to promote internationalization: one public health science program based on a Brazilian counterpart teaches students about mobility networks but has had little success in getting students to Brazil.

**Mrs. Patricia Atherley, Senior Assistant Registrar, Student Enrollment and Retention Unit (SERU), University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus, Barbados**

Presentation: Annex XIII

My presentation is essentially an overview of UWI practices, it being CARICOM's foremost university. It functions as a true regional university, similarly to the University of the Pacific. It has 17 contributing countries and three physical campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados—plus operations in Belize and on many islands. It is truly Pan Caribbean, including the Dutch Caribbean, Costa Rica, and Panama—with collaboration with Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, Guyana, and Venezuela. Most of these countries are either Members or Associate Members of CARICOM, so they can take examinations through the Caribbean Examinations Council. UWI's virtual open campus has distance and professional education, agreements with many national and community colleges, and franchises for lower-level courses and full degrees. A 2+2 transfer program has advanced standing.

Internationalization is a strategic goal for UWI, with its alliances, partnerships, and Office of Global Affairs strongly pushing this. The university has partnerships with over 150 other HE institutions. These facilitate staff movement for study and research, but more students leave than come back, following the funding.

UWI has to create a structure for credit/diploma validation for bachelor's, master's, and PhD programs, offering a variety of options. For inter-institutional degrees, there is a joint UWI-China program with the Global Institute of Software Technology (GIST) in Suzhou, Jiangsu, for a degree in software technology. UWI also has a one-year program for research or studies abroad. There are dual/double/multiple degrees, with separate degrees from two institutions: e.g., the MSc program in Sports Science with the Canada's University of New Brunswick (UNB).

UWI follows a semester-based academic year, from September to January and January to May. Undergraduates must start at the beginning of the first semester, but graduates can start at the beginning of the second. There are also summer institutes for continuing education and professional training. Programs are located within the faculties and departments. Sports Science has a new academy at each campus.

Admission for a bachelor's degree requires at least three years of study from an associate's degree with advanced qualifications. Students may opt for a single major; Bachelor of Arts (BA) may be combined with BS (Bachelor of Science and Technology) degrees for a double major or a major and minor. Mixed programs exist.

Standards are high. One credit equals three classroom hours per week. Courses combine lectures, tutorials, laboratories, practice, active learning, assessment, and examinations. A Bachelor's degree requires 90 credits and a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0, with a ranking system for those with a higher GPA. Master's programs include Arts (MA), Science and Technology (MS), Law (LL.M), Business Administration (MBA), and Research (MPhil). Doctoral programs include Professional Doctorate (DBA, DM, EdD), Research Doctorate (PhD, MD), and joint PhD programs. Graduate degrees require a higher GPA. Post-graduate students are more internationally mobile.

For medicine and law, students enter immediately after high school, similarly to the UK. Non-English-speaking students must pass the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) examination before beginning studies, along with high scores in other areas. UWI has a testing center for English. Mature entry is common.

The credit validation and qualification framework ranges from levels 1–10 (Certificate I to Doctoral Degree). There is a five-year limit for transferring credits and procedures to follow. UWI accepts the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD); International Baccalaureate; German *Abitur*; and a US high school diploma with a minimum GPA of 3.0, high standardized test scores, and successful completion of Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

UWI's goal is to be a global university located in the Caribbean; it has an Office of Global Affairs with partnerships with over 150 other institutions. It is moving towards external credit evaluation. A flexible structure and admissions system is crucial for supporting internationalization.

**Dr. Jean-Claude Kalubi-Lukura, Full Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Sherbrooke, Canada**

Differences and similarities exist among structures, credit validation systems, and diplomas at all program levels. In the Americas, current vision and values generally see their goal as educating, qualifying, and socializing, while teaching responsibility, innovation, creativity, and solidarity. Objectives involve understanding needs in constant transformation, strengthening capacity for action, developing practical skills, and focusing on professionalism.

Emphasis is on tomorrow's society, changing it for the better and centering capacities for action in terms of practice. Universities work globally, integrating objectives from many countries in an effort to stay competitive.

There are gaps among educational structures. A certificate requires 30 credits. For full-time students, a first-level (bachelor's) degree requires anywhere from 90 to 120 credits. The second cycle or master's degree calls for 15-30 credits, while a PhD requires 90-120 credits, with at least 60 of them in research.

An interpolation exists among research, training, and innovative practices, with professional development programs in research and other areas. Internships are available for capacity-building; government guidelines list what skills to develop. These happen in cooperating institutions, involving initiation into international cooperation. Yet there must be a broader alternative that transcends appropriate theoretical and practical learning. Learning cannot be reduced to applying technical/technological solutions to practical problems. Universities need to include an ethic of responsibility (especially in teachers' training) and develop reflective thinking that encompasses originality, innovation, and meeting needs of clients and students.

Teachers must learn to develop appropriate solutions, both organizationally and along the different axes of their professional career (“professionalization”). They need to validate professional choice, especially with first-year university students (freshmen), and empower them to focus on that choice. The second (sophomore) year involves immersion and inclusion in a professional context, social adaptation, and learning to take charge of tasks and duties. The third (junior) year integrates socio-professional integration. The final (senior) year means working on autonomy to support the tasks and duties of a teacher, plus social adaptation.

Mobility means learning how to advance one's own project with its structures and duties and how to integrate. The University of Sherbrooke's Research Center works with students from all over the world. Every day involves “shop talk” and cultural discussions in an atmosphere of inclusion and open-mindedness.

### Plenary Discussion

- Canada has good study-internship programs and clear career paths. Short-term visits benefit students and let them explore. Could students study in Canadian universities but go to Brazil for a year as an option? This might help build partnerships—and not just for full-time students. In the USA, many universities allow study abroad for six months or a year, sometimes in a dual-degree program with mention of foreign experience.
- In today's globalized world, there should be many ways to internationalize. OAS wants to bring universities together to develop and firmly anchor partnerships. It will answer any questions via e-mail.
- One participant asked whether UWI is going to morph into a postgraduate institution. Is every state to be sovereign and have its own university? What about fees? The reply was that in UWI, undergraduates still outnumber postgraduates; but fields of coverage are limited. It cannot morph yet. As for fees, non-CARICOM undergraduates pay more; but postgraduate students' self-funded programs pay the same. UWI is currently pushing emphasis on research and funding, for students do not want to leave a steady job for full-time study. The Caribbean needs to fund scholarships while addressing family and financial considerations.

### Round Table 4: Panel Discussion—Strategies and Challenges for University Cooperation in the Americas

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**Session Video:** <https://paho.webex.com/paho/ldr.php?RCID=f857041e0916a78ab96d28d25733459b>

**Moderator:** Dr. Winsome Leslie, President, DevSolutions Consulting, LLC

- Panel**
- Dr. Linda A. Davis, Provost, University of The Bahamas (UB), The Bahamas
  - Dr. Cristian Ricardo Wittmann, Director of International Affairs, Federal University of Pampa (UniPampa), Brazil
  - Dr. Mark S. Langevin, Director, Brazilian Initiative; Visiting Professor, Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University (GW), USA
  - Dr. Oscar Ocho, Director, University of the West Indies School of Nursing (UWISoN), Jamaica (Virtual)
  - Dr. Hans-Jürgen Hoyer, Secretary General, International Federation of Engineering Education Societies (IFEES), George Mason University (GMU), USA

The panel expressed pleasure at being part of the internationalization team. GMU's School of Medicine wants to renew its landscape of international cooperation with students at all levels. With matched funding, many young GMU professionals are likely to pursue future collaboration; but the issue is how to tackle challenges and improve.

In terms of Caribbean universities, The University of the West Indies (UWI) is a regional institution with three campuses in Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago. Several faculties have formalized relationships with different institutions internationally. UWI is more than willing to build collaborative partnerships with academic institutions in LAC to facilitate both staff and student exchanges. Its current strategic framework focuses on the “Triple A” strategy of alignment, access, and agility. The University of The Bahamas (UB) received its charter on 16 November 2017, but few know of its 40-year history as the College of The Bahamas. As the farthest Caribbean country, more than Belize, The Bahamas has been pushed more to the North than to the South. UB partners with Costa Rica, the International Association of Universities, and Mexico, and chances for new contacts with Cuba and for Latin American expansion beyond the Caribbean. Both UB and UWI are open to opportunities to enable internationalization and want to explore these opportunities as wisely as possible.

One of the challenges faced by individuals in the Caribbean is limited information on the availability of scholarships in LAC. For the most part, students are well acquainted with attendant matriculation requirements in the USA, Canada and even the UK. However, except for a special government scholarship made available to prospective students, there is a general dearth of scholarship information available to them. One possible strategy to make information on Program scholarships more readily available would be to collaborate with the scholarship divisions of various government ministries as the first point of contact for promoting the scholarships in their country.

UniPampa is in Southern Brazil, far from airports and capital cities, with challenges *vis-à-vis* infrastructure and funding for international cooperation—but its main challenge is not language but attracting students. Coimbra needs ways, means, and strategies to bring students to Brazil overall, not just its best-known cities. Smaller cities off the tourist routes tend to suffer in comparison, making it harder to attract students, send them abroad, or attract visiting professors—despite their unique character. Universities like UniPampa can reach out more and do more with less. UniPampa has special relationships and extensive cooperation with twin cities in Uruguay and Argentina, in a specific strategy to promote the university and attract and retain students and workers. It sees new perspectives for local and international cooperation alike, with a new category of border students from its twin cities who have special access to studies in Brazil. Since last year, the university has organized joint simultaneous events held in two countries. Now it seeks new opportunities for students and researchers, as well as new avenues for collaboration. UniPampa has bilateral collaboration agreements in place with 12 universities in LAC that provide special mechanisms for international mobility and leadership and hopes to develop 40 more to offer its students and professors experience abroad. When promoting internationalization, UniPampa faces challenges regarding funding; it has an International Master’s Program in Disasters but needs support to keep it up and running.

Brazilian universities’ three pillars are teaching, research, and outreach. They must not only engage in community outreach but also find ways to integrate into their communities and have international students work in them. A Brazil-Canada partnership has students spending three months in Brazil and three in Canada working in local development. This promotes community outreach between countries, meeting the goals set by internationalization.

GW has had internationalization activities with Brazil in several cities and with two universities in New Orleans: Loyola University, via its exchange program with the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) for studies in tropical ecology and international law; and Tulane University, via its study abroad program in international law and its Latin American Studies Center. GW has a program for a year abroad in Brazil on foreign policy studies, which enabled Dr. Langevin to serve as a human bridge when developing GW’s Brazilian Initiative. Now GW has two visiting scholars from Brazil, as well as both undergraduate and graduate students. Could GW also send students to Rio de Janeiro or other places? Marketing leans towards Rio, but the university would like to develop collaboration with other places. Many initiatives result from up-front, personal contact: faculty meet and set up a project, ironing out the details back and forth. Dr. Langevin’s teaching in Campinas and São Paulo facilitated Brazilian students coming to GW to explore the many international organizations. Undergraduates have the most to learn from an international experience. So, can university workers. Ideas abound but funding does not. Rather than large projects, universities should look at smaller ones yielding fruit that may lead to greater things in the long run.

Human bridges and champions—especially faculty champions—are necessary for innovative projects that spearhead the transformative process. They could promote foreign language learning. Once bitten by the international bug, there is no turning back. All universities have access to language courses. Sometimes these are only utilized by majors but not by people who simply want to travel: e.g., learning English for International Relations in Brazilian universities, for better pay and prestige. GMU wondered how universities can move beyond this in their projects.

How to induce young people to become more mobile so that they can make a greater impact? For students, the academic recess would be a great chance to spend a few weeks in immersion abroad, through a joint academic approach, requiring a minimum of work but still providing exposure to issues affecting communities. Dr. Ocho from UWI recommended building collaboration enabling students to participate in a broader, community-based experience providing both academic and cultural experience. In so doing, community-based activities could facilitate development of cultural sensitivity as well as fulfill academic requirements.

There are all sorts of roadblocks to dissuade human bridges, especially decentralization; but persistence pays off. Usually universities will allow champions pursue their ideas and work things out for internationalization. There is still a way to go, but universities must empower their human bridges and exploit positive externalities. Most champions expect no personal benefit or recognition and operate on initiative alone. One of the strategies that could be used is cross-cultural research projects. This will allow for maximization of resources, both human and material, with a view to building sustained collaboration.

This pushes beyond the traditional view of student exchange, with opportunities expanding across new areas. Different disciplines in one place interacting and interfacing with diverse perspectives can create innovative solutions. Universities need new and different ways of engaging that go beyond the box, with joint efforts that move beyond what has worked up to now and linkages that create professional opportunities and prevent silos.

How to make it attractive to go abroad? Universities are top-down institutions, but students work in national associations. Appreciating students' energy and insight will give universities the necessary guidance to steer their role. Brazil's inviting a professor to come speak means his/her learning from the students what they are interested in doing. While there might be disagreement, ideas are positive and can fly and internationalization occurs.

The Scholarship Program's 2016 project list shows that, out of 400, only two scholarship recipients came from Haiti and a few from Suriname. How to increase short-term uptake in the Caribbean? As Dr. Ocho noted, this would increase if more students knew of the scholarships. If the traditional way does not work; there are more innovative ways, like 2+2 and other modalities. Universities might look for a short, two-week experience abroad with a host institution and funding agency. Access to technology helps us draw experience inward and send it outward. SISs faces challenges with rising seas and climate change, which create opportunities for research and collaboration.

How to get things moving? The first thing to look at is whether available offers are palatable. Without positioning opportunities properly, universities cannot implement them. In the USA, universities have a repertoire in the Caribbean to tap into and build on. Technology can help create opportunities for academic mobility by sharing expertise. The Caribbean and other countries then have a chance to provide input. A course in international relations exploring opportunities at ministries will enable students to gain specialized experience in this area—an innovation needing bridges for exchange of expertise. The Program will provide more international exchange between the Caribbean and Brazil. Students and professionals can then relate to each other on an international wavelength through personal contact, regardless of country. This provides opportunities for building a research community.

Immigration laws can create obstacles by blocking student mobility: e.g., Brazil working hard to bring in students from Haiti only to have their visas denied. This happens in the USA, too. It can also hinder academic travel back and forth to engage and enter into debate on international problems. Trade agreements need to embed university education into a special category to facilitate bridge-builders crossing borders.

An innovative suggestion from GW was to create a *Clearinghouse for the Americas* for all institutions, players, and students where they can interface. Brazil leads in this now. Such an endeavor could create tools to get more programs involved in the international arena. Participants saw the meeting as an excellent forum for this. It would help develop strategies for operating in today's global environment. Borders are more open now. Universities and institutions can look for opportunities to build bridges beyond the present structures.

## Plenary Discussion

- Participants praised both the panel and the moderator, but saw students as their best-kept secret.
- WHO's Global Observatory needs indicators to develop global health alliances and guide human resource development. Countries need to maintain the observatory with platforms to make data available. A small-scale pilot was suggested for this, to be expanded later.

- Millennials being the target of the scholarships, how can universities track them? Young people have evolved. Universities often invite young scholars, but how to involve and retain them to promote their own scholarships?
- The North aggressively publicizes and advertises its scholarships, with balance a challenge. Despite concerns in the North, more South-South opportunities are needed. The USA has grants to pull in more than one country. It all boils down to who provides more experience. People may not want to stay in the Region; but they might change their mind if they knew more about South-South opportunities. Lack of awareness and data is a deterrent to developing South-South partnerships in favor of moving North. Language learning helps.
- What regulations are needed for research and practicum internships? In the USA, universities and NGOs offer the best students stipends to work there. What about subsidizing a survival allowance for Brazil?
- In The Bahamas, the university is working directly with the government to establish such protocols. Students can enter through a cohort mechanism cleared by the university through immigration, thanks to direct contact with a positive administration. *Vis-à-vis* payments for internships, the university cannot provide them at present; but what about approaching businesses, banks, hospitals, and NGOs for this?
- Sadly, reality can paint another picture. UNESCO and PAHO provided funding for South-South collaboration; but countries dropped the ball, rejecting minimal charges for cost-sharing schemes.
- Scholarships Program partners need to commit to getting as close to cost-neutral as possible. Faculty should receive salary while on exchange or when working abroad. The North has fluid funding, unlike the South. LAC needs more partnerships, with horizontal cooperation a must. Universities can use whatever they have at their disposal: energy, low-cost housing, or joint planning. The process is not always top-down because people close to the bottom have something to offer. It needs to be more horizontal, pragmatic, and participatory.
- Nor have universities leveraged technology for faculty or trained them to deal with advanced technology. How to embed innovations into programs? Each country needs its own Brazilian Initiative. How can faculty imbed internationalization into the curriculum? This needs no training but may involve travel.

Thus, ended the meeting sessions. Thanks were extended to the participants for their rich conversation. Conference photos are available at: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/62823766@N08/W0h1PJ>.

## Final Remarks

**Dr. Rossana Valéria de Souza e Silva, Executive Director, Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (CGBU); General Coordinator, OAS-CGBU Partnerships Program for Education and Training (PAEC), Brazil**

Dr. Silva thanked all participants for their invaluable participation: PAHO, and the OAS, without whose support none of this would have been possible, as well as Member States, public authorities, visiting experts, speakers, country representatives, institutions, and universities. The meeting provided a singular occasion to discuss new projects and evaluate those in development, both with partners and the universities, sharing responsibility to serve the Americas. Participants can seek present and future solutions. Dr. Silva expressed her pleasure in coordinating the Scholarships Program and in working with all involved both now and in the future.

**Dr. Luis Gabriel Cuervo, Senior Advisor for Health Policy and Systems Research, Unit of Health Systems and Access, Department of Health Systems and Services, PAHO/WHO**

Dr. Cuervo thanked all participants for being present and the PAHO Director, Dr. Carissa Etienne, and its Assistant Director, Dr. Francisco Becerra Posada, for their initiative in this project—and everyone who collaborated in this endeavor, including partners. Collective efforts have changed the lives of 335 scholarship recipients through programs with Coimbra, providing a strategic opportunity to strengthen countries' health systems. The meeting report will record its ideas for posterity, to guide informed decisions from now on.

## Closing Activity: Slideshow—PAHO’s Pictorial History

Presentations: Annexes XV and XVI

Session Video: <https://paho.webex.com/paho/ldr.php?RCID=4cf78f680b1ce8f0b139b847b8f8e744>

Following the sessions, Drs. Juan Manuel Sotelo and José Romero Teruel of PAHO/WHO provided a slideshow on PAHO’s history, from its beginnings in 1902 as the world’s first international health agency, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (now the name for Headquarters). PAHO predates WHO, joining it in 1949 as the health agency for the Americas. PAHO also functions as health secretariat for the OAS. Its goal is universal health coverage: *Health for All*. According to PAHO’s Director, Dr. Carissa Etienne, “universal health coverage is a powerful concept and a powerful movement ... it is a process rather than a finite goal.”

PAHO has a commendable history of intervention in health matters. Starting with trade quarantines for yellow fever and malaria, focus quickly shifted to public health. Distinguished staff included Carlos Finlay, who first suspected mosquitoes as the vectors for yellow fever Panama’s canal workers; Carlos Chagas, who discovered American trypanosomiasis; and such unsung heroines as the “nurses on horseback” who delivered health services to remote areas. Since then, PAHO has provided consistent leadership in public health matters in the Americas.

PAHO has 20 Country Offices and three Pan American Centers: BIREME for health science literature (housing the Virtual Health Library / VHS), the Latin American Center for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PANAFTOSA, dedicated to zoonotic diseases), and the Latin American Center for Perinatology (CLAP, for neonatal and maternal health). Its budget amounts to US\$ 5 million annually: half comes from donors and half from Member States.

The headquarters building was inaugurated in 1965 and built on land donated by the United States Government. Its landmark design is the work of Uruguayan architect Román Fresnedo Siri. PAHO flies all the flags of the Americas and celebrates World Health Day every April 2. Its amphitheater hosts meetings of its Directing Council and Pan American Sanitary Conferences, attended by the Ministers of Health of all Member States. The latter are commemorated by the 29 bronze seals on the outside of the building surrounding the amphitheater.



Photo 2 6th University Internationalization Seminar, Opening ceremony at OAS