

**CLADEA**  
**Guide** to  
Responsible  
*Business*  
**Education** in  
Latin America

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# 2

## **Balance between the management strategies and the pedagogical strategies as support for research. Department of Business Administration Universidad Central**

How is research organized?

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The processes of investigation in the training of future directors of organizations<sup>3</sup> allow them to develop skills to reach their professional potential. In this regard, the strategies designed by the academy that support said processes acquire special relevance. This proposal shows how the Department of Business Administration of the Universidad Central has defined managerial and educational strategies that articulately allow them to carry out investigative processes through mechanisms such as: integrated projects, hotbeds of research, research groups (UC-GIGO) and relations with the external sector.

**Keywords:** management, research, teaching, hotbeds, relations with the external sector

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- 3 The concept of the organizations is understood according to the program of Business Administration at the Universidad Central as belonging to a category of business that includes both profitable and non-profitable forms as key aspects of the organizations' administration.

## Introduction: Universidad Central

The identity of the Universidad Central is developed in the *Proyecto Educativo Institucional* (PEI) as a way of contributing to the consolidation of autonomous processes and the expression of free thought. The PEI seeks to bring about autonomy, equality and freedom between members of the academic community. In accordance with the PEI, the Universidad Central is an institution that thinks about the macro of its own possibilities, in its strengths and its challenges; this unique and particular characteristic demands that it responds to the social needs of its environment as an institution of quality, with a social and humanistic character (Universidad Central, 2013).

From another angle, the policy of research defines the Universidad Central as a teaching university that also undertakes research. This implies a strengthening of quality teaching through outreach and research into the understanding of environmental problems and the training of professionals who can intervene and provide solutions themselves. In this framework, the policy establishes the following principles: the promotion of the production of new knowledge, the production of academic discussions, the dissemination and visibility of the results as a product of the research, and the strengthening of the management of research (Universidad Central, 2015).

All of these features and the distinctive institutional focus of the university permeate the principles of training and the administrative management of academic programs, including that of Business Administration; the aim of this program is to create critical, entrepreneurial professionals who have strategic-thinking skills and an understanding of public and private organizations that enables them to generate relevant, responsible proposals for improvement. For this purpose, a key challenge in setting up the program is to establish an adequate balance between the duties of teaching, research and outreach that make possible the relevant training of the students.

## Challenges for the program of Business Administration in the management of research

In 2015, the university adopted the policy of research, innovation and creation, in the interests of increasing the strength and effectiveness of its presence within the scenarios of production and new understanding—and within the national system of science, technology and innovation—through the promotion of groups and lines of investigation. Also, the policy was compiled to promote a better balance between the mission functions and the objective of creating solutions to the problems that are brought about by society and the country (Universidad Central, 2015a).

Additionally, the institutional research task should be carried out through the policy of the advancement of science, technology and innovation (CTI) put forward by Colciencias<sup>4</sup>, the governmental entity in charge of regulating research processes in the country. With regard to that, Colciencias coordinates the Sistema Nacional de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (SNCTI), it produces strategies for the social appropriation of CTI, and promotes the strengthening of administrative tools for management, such as the platforms referred to as CvLAC, GrupLAC and InstituLAC<sup>5</sup>.

In this double framework of institutional and national action, the program of Business Administration deals with the necessity and challenge of balancing both the institutional policy and the national guidelines, thus redefining the role of research within its academic project. It is in this way that the program understands research as a fundamental process in the development of the abilities of the student body—one which allows them to contribute to the solution of the associated problems in the fields of administration and management.

To that end, the research in the program develops through the research group UC-GIGO, created in 2005, with the aim of building knowledge that addresses the problems of organizations from the point of view of complexity, that is to say in accordance with dialogic, homogrammatic and resourceful principles, and with the understanding that there are several study prospects for reaching that end.

## What did it accomplish?

The program of Business Administration defines its efforts in two ways: research itself and formative research.

The first of these refers to the processes carried out by teachers who undertake a formal research project within the university. Thus, the research itself comes about through the organization of a formal project that builds upon the lines of investigation<sup>6</sup> established by the group UC-GIGO, and in which it's possible to involve the students through different modalities (thesis, auxiliaries or research assistants).

In the formative research the professor-researcher makes a complementary analytical effort to systemize the knowledge produced with the students in the

4 Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation.

5 CvLAC (Currículum Vitae de Latinoamérica y el Caribe): platform that manages the CVs of the researchers (Colciencias, 2016). GrupLAC: platform that manages the information of the research groups (Colciencias, 2016). InstituLAC: platform that manages the information of the Instituciones del Sistema Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología e Innovación SNCTI (Colciencias, 2016).

6 The lines of investigation of the UC-GIGO group are: Strategy and Management, Colombian Entrepreneurial Problems and Colombian Public Organizations (Universidad Central, 2015).

integrated projects, thus contributing conceptual and methodological rigor. In particular, in the program of Business Administration, three integrated projects take place that form part of the study plan and are compatible with Administrative Thinking 2, Management and Analysis, and Organizational Design respectively. These integrated projects are aimed at developing competencies in the students and bringing them closer to real organizational problems, allowing them to understand how such problems are resolved, as well as strengthening their fundamental research competencies.

In addition, the formative research creates a structure for the hotbed of investigation, *Prácticas Administrativas y Estudios de Género* SAGESSE, which was created in 2012 and was conceived as the natural space for strengthening the research activity of the students.

Furthermore, it was considered important to establish a five-year strategic agenda for UC-GIGO, in order to establish the aim of the group and come up with short-term and medium-term action plans that would allow them to maintain their Colciencias classification of category B, along with a long-term plan to reach category A.

## Lessons learned

The strategies implemented in the department aimed at facing the challenges in the field of research have produced satisfactory results. For example, the approaches used with the external sector have brought about the structuring of inter-institutional agreements, such as in the case of the research project on participative entrepreneurship in three paths in the region of La Sabana in Bogotá, conducted in conjunction with two other higher education institutions<sup>7</sup>.

Additionally, the administrative management of the research group UC-GIGO has not only helped the research processes in an efficient way but it has also contributed to complying with the parameters stipulated by the Universidad Central's policy of research, which seeks to comply with the demands of Colciencias. This has resulted in the group being classified in category B for the last two years.

With regard to the formative research, the hotbed of research SAGESSE has an important position in the network REDCOLSI<sup>8</sup>: projects presented by SAGESSE in regional and national events have won first place, which has allowed students to participate in international events representing the university and the network.

In respect of the integrated projects, these have allowed the students to develop competencies in reading and writing, which are required in the professional

7 The agreement was signed during the second semester of 2015 between the following institutions: Universidad Central, Corporación Unificada Superior (CUN), and Fundación para la Educación Superior (FUS).

8 RedColsi is the Network of Research Hotbeds in Colombia (RedColsi, 2016).



practices they will undertake once the formative process ends. The projects have also contributed to the production of research documents, which have been put together and published by professors of the program.

Finally, these learning processes have contributed to the production of two post-graduate programs: the Masters in Management of Organizations and the Specialization in Management and Entrepreneurial Social Responsibility.

## Challenges to be faced

In terms of formative research, the hotbed of research SAGESSE and the integrated projects have important challenges to face in the future. With regard to SAGESSE, it is important to continue motivating the students of the program who participate in the different activities that contribute to its consolidation. Concerning the integrated projects, the program should produce strategies that involve the students so that they formalize and disseminate their efforts and research results through the approaches to organizational problems.

Additionally, UC-GIGO has the long-term challenge of being classified in category A<sup>9</sup>; to achieve this it is essential to increase efforts to generate the greater visibility of the researchers, the program and the institution, creating a research culture and uniting the different parties involved to achieve common objectives through the results that the research processes bring about. The group itself should continue applying the different management tools mentioned previously with the aim of sustaining these processes.

Likewise, within the program of Business Administration there have appeared new initiatives that seek to consolidate INGENIUM's role of creating cooperation between the university and companies<sup>10</sup>. One of those is the program called *Yo soy ciudadano*, whose objective is to train the vulnerable population in topics relating to the construction of business plans. Similarly, in the middle of 2015 the *Consultorio Organizacional* was launched, whose objective is to generate proposals and strategies on behalf of the students of Business Administration that contribute to the improvement of organizational management of small businesses in Bogotá and the surrounding region. One of the challenges in the coming days is to balance these initiatives with different research projects that jointly allow them to impact society and at the same time generate academic products that manage to consolidate the program.

9 In accordance with measurement carried out by Colciencias.

10 INGENIUM is the unit of innovation whose aim is to mobilize the relationship between the university and the companies. INGENIUM is in charge of ensuring and facilitating the social impact of the program of Business Administration.

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