

UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA  
IN KATOWICE

# MISSION STATEMENT



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KATOWICE, MAY 1997

The University of Silesia, operating in accordance with the ethos of European scholarship, assumes that as a community of scholars and students bound up with mutual respect and trust it not only responds to the increasing educational needs by providing instruction at the best possible level and conducting research which respects the elementary right of academic freedom in the pursuit of Truth, but also carries out a significant social mission consisting in encouraging self-development as well as the formation of creative attitudes and spiritual aspirations, whereby it helps shape the cultural image of the Region and Poland.

Whilst being committed to both preserving and disseminating knowledge which is a legacy of past generations, the University of Silesia also actively contributes to the cultural heritage of society through the pursuit of art and creative research, the interpretation of contemporary reality and the analysis of the evolution of values which shape the immediate environment. Both the geographical and cultural situation of the University, at a junction of regions to every one of which History assigned a different course, yet which for centuries have developed their culture through interpenetration and dialogue, endows the University with a European dimension and enables it to define itself as a place whose identity is constituted not by its isolation, but by its readiness to welcome the Other and Different.

## **1. UNIVERSITY AND VALUES**

In its operations, the University of Silesia accepts the following values:

- \* Truth, to which there aspires Intellect through the pursuit of art and research. We believe that scientific reflection and art have the same source and aim subordinated to Wisdom and their purpose is to benefit and develop the Human Being.

- \* Knowledge, which we impart through high quality teaching at Bachelors, Masters and PhD levels, This model of higher education meets the needs of society and the University should be open to the greatest possible number of people whose wish is to study. Keeping faith with its ideals the University believes that growth in recruitment of students should be controlled by concern about assuring the quality of teaching as well as adequate, respectable teaching space.

Guided by these value we believe that:

- \* the University as a member of the world academic community should encourage international partnerships and exchanges. The findings of research should be disseminated through publications and preserved, as a cultural heritage, in university libraries. The University of Silesia prides itself on having within its community representatives of the Arts and expects that their works should become accessible to the general public in university galleries, cinemas and concert halls;

- \* academic programmes should aim not only at acquisition of knowledge and skills, but first and foremost at development of creative attitudes towards the world;

- \*- the University deeply appreciates the legacy of many years' efforts, dating back to the 1930s, to establish a university in Silesia whilst wishing, to contribute through academic education and research to the making of the future of the region, It operates in the belief that this aim can be achieved by internationalisation of teaching and research,

development of the network of partnerships with Polish and foreign universities, and the University's environment. It is the University's duty to both perfect the forms of its own activity and also present it to the local community so as to find the best and most efficient ways of maximising its potential in research, educational and consultative work for the benefit of the Region;

- \* rapidly changing reality presents a challenge of lifelong learning. It is a crucial element of the university's mission to create learning opportunities for those in work and also those who, although retired, still wish to pursue their interests;

- \* through partnership with secondary schools of various types, the University can help not only facilitate a difficult moment of transition from Secondary to Higher Education, but also modify curricula to make them compatible with the university requirements.

- \* along with providing education the University aims to encourage students' participation in the life of academia and Support their involvement in research, cultural activity and decision making processes so as to make them sensitive to social responsibilities and, by the same token, prepare its future graduates for taking part in public life.

## **2. UNIVERSITY IN SOCIETY**

The University believes that its role is to train specialists in particular disciplines and at the same time future participants in public life, those who will serve smaller or larger communities. Therefore the University's role is not only to facilitate students' acquisition of knowledge but to better foster the conviction that an educated person does not shun public and civic duties but performs them in an ethical and competent way aware of the fact that he/she should serve a community to which he/she owes constant perfection of his/her self and abilities.

The University protects its political independence and serves civic society by inculcating the notion that political power (regardless of the administration level) exercised with no sense of civil duty or need for learning weakens its own authority and efficacy.

The University, while accepting the principles of competition ruling the free-market economy, guards the foundations of the ethics of disinterestedness by applying forms, methods and procedures which promoting progress and cooperation oppose, however, such conduct whose sole objectives are the protection of possessions or ruthless rivalry. We believe that the aim of the University is to create conditions favourable for the education of future leaders of local communities, national and European bodies. We define the art of leadership as the ability to inspire, guide and support such activities whose purpose is the common good.

The University of Silesia perceives itself as a meeting place for the exchange of ideas of all academic and creative circles of the Region, thus aiming to make the University an integral part of a broadly conceived "innovative community" which acts with a view to diagnosing and solving the problems of the Region which is undergoing an extremely difficult process of technological, social and educational restructuring.

In this way, the University ministers to the needs of local communities by assisting them in a diagnosis and description of their distinct features and problems, while thanks to the nature of the analysis, helping them consider their dilemmas from the perspective of European and world scholarship.

## **3. UNIVERSITY AS AN INSTITUTION**

While Faculties enjoy considerable power and independence of decision making, the University constitutes a cohesive whole where friendly administrative staff supports research and educational interests of Academia.

The sense of unity of the academic community must be strengthened by awareness that all organisational units while taking decisions are guided not only by their own particular interests, but also by the interests of the whole University.

The governing principle of the management of the University is not holding office, but solving problems. Decisions taken with a view to the future and conducive to the development of the University should be reached by means of negotiations leading to a consensus between particular units. The ambition of the University is development and not mere survival. The University should be an example of a modern institution in which the principles of economic rationality established by the law must be observed. Yet to be fully effective they require not only an atmosphere of common kindness and trust, but also a sense of moral obligation to assist one another and cooperate. This sense should manifest itself in the respect which scholars show to the accomplishments of their Colleagues representing other branches of learning, in a decorous relationship between students and academic teachers, and a good understanding and friendliness among academic staff; students and administrators. Although these principles cannot be ordained by decree, they are a prerequisite for the good discharge of duties by the University.

The university signifies a specific moral obligation to all generations co-creating the history of the nation and the world, as a result of which a rich heritage of scholarship is augmented through new research, individual aspirations become realized in activities for the benefit of the whole academic community, while the quality of education is an object of overriding concern. As a community of scholars and students, the University is committed not only to dissemination of information relevant to students' future professional careers, but first of all to revealing their abilities and introducing them to cognitive territories which they might wish to enter by themselves, as thinking people who, with care and solicitude, participate in everyday reality. Through the agency of scholarship the University takes care of educating the Person of the student.

#### 4. UNIVERSITY AND QUALITY

The issue of quality concerns research, teaching and administrative activity of the University alike. In all these spheres, quality is achieved through individuals' responsibility for the conscientious discharge of duties, but this awareness is strictly linked to the existence of commonly known and approved procedures for quality evaluation. Key objectives to attain are:

- \* development of all subject disciplines practised at the University which must not disregard a single branch of learning, even, or perhaps in particular, when it is a discipline for which there is little or no demand in the labour market, or which is not congenial to free-market economic realities. The University should clearly delineate the course of its future development and, by the same token, identify those disciplines whose further progress should be specifically encouraged, which on no account should mean disregarding other branches of learning. The University should seek to offer its scholars the best possible research and working conditions;
- \* creation of the most favourable studying conditions through the carefully balanced ratio between the number of students and that of academic staff involved in teaching. The ratio must reflect both the need for proper and effective pursuit of knowledge and the economic situation of the University;
- \* refinement of curricula and teaching programmes so that they meet the requirements of modern education and fully conform to economic and financial regulations by which the University is bound. Interpenetration of various regions of culture and scholarship is conducive to the introduction of individual and interdisciplinary studies. This requires development of new educational techniques as well as careful and systematic evaluation of research and teaching activities;
- \* development of a system of evaluation of the University's administrative operations the outcome of which would provide a basis for further reorganisation of the administrative structure;

- \* gradual implementation of the European Credit Transfer System;
- \* refinement of mechanisms for rewarding research and teaching achievements and also effective administrative operations;
- \* intensification of efforts leading to more effective involvement of academic staff in research, application for grants and pursuit of opportunities for contract research assignments.

## 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE UNIVERSITY

The University is an institution with cognitive, ethical, pedagogical and economic objectives which assembles scholars, students and administrative staff, and must therefore signify harmonious and solidary co-operation of all people working for its benefit. We believe that the University's graduates keeping alive the memory of the University in their professional operations remain its integral part and, through their conduct and work, continue to build up its prestige and reputation.

\* *Cognitively,*

the task of the University is to conduct research and develop new forms of description of the world, and discover laws and principles which govern it. The ruling principle of the University's operations is its incessant endeavour to open up new cognitive vistas. In this sense, research work can never yield ultimate results, that is to say such that would put an end to posing any further questions; the teacher is himself/herself a disciple wholly dedicated to gaining knowledge and perfecting his/her reflection.

The University founds its cognitive activities on the pursuit of Truth and Its illumination from various viewpoints whilst fully respecting ideological and methodological differences.

The University of Silesia will lay increasing emphasis on refinement of research both for its own sake and as an essential element of

the high quality teaching process in the belief that the University opens the path to thinking and pursuing learning in the presence and participation of students.

\* *Didactically,*

the University as a community of students and teachers / researchers (*universitas magistrorum et studentium*) acts in the belief that effective operation and gratifying didactic results depend on the effort put in fostering a creative approach towards reality. The objective of teaching is to stimulate the ability to ask questions and then together seek answers. The more the answer is related to the students' individual reflection, the more fully the mission of the University is accomplished since its task is to offer its students the most favourable conditions of learning through contact with professors and other academic teachers. To this end are introduced new more flexible teaching programmes as well as opportunities for multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary study. The programmes should not only incorporate diverse opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills relevant to the needs of the labour market, but also they should help develop a sense of intellectual and vocational flexibility combined with the disposition towards lifelong learning.

\* *Ethically,*

the University serves the Freedom of the Individual who through learning fulfils part of his/her vocation and freedom of research on which rests respect for the Human Being and all animate as well as inanimate nature.

In his/her teaching mission, the teacher not only shows the desire to convey and shape knowledge, but first and foremost his/her willingness to communicate with others. To sustain and cultivate friendly relationship between Teacher and Student as well as between Researcher and Administrator is one of the principal objectives of the University.

Whilst fully supporting the popularisation and development of information technology we would like to stress the University's responsibility for the human dimension of scholarship which,

approaching the subject of research and attempting to describe it to the Other, helps avoid the banality of ready-made solutions.

The ultimate mission of university education is to be prepared to recognise the value of every individual without ignoring the challenge posed by the increasing educational needs of society. In satisfying them the University must take great care to assure the high quality of teaching and research.

\* *Economically,*

the University as an institution financed by the state, due to the paucity of funds allocated to education should constantly strive, in the public interest, to seek other sources of funding. Thus the University is not only a research and didactic "enterprise", but also an institution which must conform to strict financial discipline while all the time maintaining a high standard of teaching and research.

This situation demands that in search of solutions to economic problems it is important to develop a particularly strong sense of solidarity among scholars, managers and students so that decisions can be taken in the consciousness that a given problem is fully comprehended and so that the University may uphold its authority by assuming one coherent attitude in negotiations with its external partners.

We believe it is imperative that the financing of Faculties should be linked to the criterion of quality. To this end we should refine decision making processes related to funding research and teaching at the University through elaboration of the principles of budget allocation that are both clear and approved by the academic community. On the one hand, members of academic staff should as actively and as widely as it is permitted by the accepted procedures participate in the process of formulating and shaping these principles, yet, on the other, their further participation should assume an advisory character since the primary task and purpose of their work at the University is to engage in teaching and research.

It will that a small group of scholars will emerge who will undertake managerial responsibilities. The presence of these Colleagues is equally essential in the Faculties and the the central administration.

Both financial limitations imposed by the State budget and the emergence of new funding opportunities mean that decisions must be taken in full awareness of risks and that the University should seek to identify and control these risks.

The risk must be taken in the belief that the University of Silesia has certain financial assets, is rich in talents, skills and technical resources which should be effectively and wisely used in such a way as to derive from them maximum cognitive and financial benefit.

*Katowice, May 20, 1997*