

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

## **For a Brighter Future: Innovation in Education**

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Conference, held in Vienna, Austria, on 8 July 2017**

In June of 1965, our illustrious founders convened the first meeting of the International Association of University Presidents, at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Wroxtton College in Oxfordshire.

Led by Peter Sammartino of the United States and Young Seek Choue of South Korea, with the energetic support of Jaime Benítez of Puerto Rico, Rocheforte Weeks of Liberia and Carlos Rómulo of the Philippines, our founders brought together more than 120 higher education leaders from around the world.

These leaders reflected the geopolitical diversity of that time. They came from wealthy countries and poor countries, from old colonial powers and newly independent nations. They came from both sides of the Iron Curtain, as well as from nations of the non-aligned movement.

And the institutions of higher education they represented were themselves extraordinarily diverse: large and small, rich and poor, religious and secular, private and public, old and new.

But in spite of these differences, our founders articulated a shared vision for global higher education:

This vision, briefly, was that higher education institutions around the world must not merely study global challenges and conflicts dispassionately from the sidelines. Rather, they must **get in the game** by solving problems through **engaged** research, **purposeful** teaching, and **mindful** outreach.

Their vision was both **of** its time and **ahead** of its time.

It was **of its time** because it responded to some of the greatest challenges of the second half of the twentieth century: institutional racism, sectarian violence, ideological intransigence, economic uncertainty, environmental degradation on a global scale, and seemingly intractable poverty.

It was **ahead of its time** because it recognized the unique role of higher education institutions in addressing these challenges – challenges which, I needn't remind you, are very much still with us, today.

Our founders also articulated a special mission for university presidents, rectors and vice chancellors – both as leaders of their respective institutions and collectively as members of IAUP.

This mission is, first, to cooperate with one another, across boundaries of geography and geopolitics, to magnify, multiply, and intensify their impact – their **academic impact – in an increasingly interdependent world**; and, second, to serve as a unified voice for global higher education.

This remains the mission of the IAUP, today.

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No one believed in this mission more passionately than Michael Adams, who served as president of IAUP all too briefly before his untimely death in 2012.

But although his time of service was lamentably short, his own impact on IAUP was great.

Under his leadership, IAUP reorganized itself as a Company and Charity under the laws of the United Kingdom – appropriately, the country in which IAUP was originally founded.

Under his leadership, IAUP expanded and intensified its relationship with the United Nations, serving as the lead organization in the development of the UN Academic Impact initiative.

Under his leadership, in partnership with the Institute for International Education and with the generous support of the Qatar Foundation, IAUP launched a unique professional development and mentoring program for newly appointed presidents, rectors, and vice chancellors.

And, under his leadership, IAUP renewed its commitment to the protection of scholars threatened by war, terrorism, and political repression, urging IAUP members to support the Institute of International Education-Scholar Rescue Fund.

It is fitting, therefore, that last night we honored Michael's memory by bestowing the J. Michael Adams Leadership and Service Award to another great global educator, Dr. Allan E. Goodman, the Sixth President of the Institute of International Education, whose work on behalf of international academic mobility and international academic freedom is second to none.

Michael Adams was my friend and my mentor and no one is more responsible for me being here today. I dedicate my own presidency to his memory and promise to you all that I will be faithful to his vision.

I look to his team, Neal King, Jason Scorza, and above all his wife Susan Adams, his ultimate teammate and now a member of our Council of Senior Advisors, to help me continue his excellent work on behalf of IAUP and global higher education.

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Our institutions are sometimes criticized for being too elitist, too conservative, and too inflexible; we are accused of being too worried about status, as we strive to climb the greasy pole of institutional rankings; and some argue that in our eagerness to chase research funds we are too willing to subordinate our research agendas to corporate and government interests.

There may be some truth to these criticisms – we can and will do better.

The main theme of this conference has been: “**Innovation in Education**” and we have touched on several different aspects, including Innovation in Teaching, Innovation in Engagement, Innovation in Cooperation, and Innovation in Research.

In order to emphasize Innovation in Research, we introduced a new dual-conference concept: on the one hand we hosted the **IAUP Triennial** Conference. And on the other hand we organized “**Young Scientists**”, giving early career researchers and graduate students an opportunity to hold their own conference at the same time, focusing on a wide range of global challenges.

The main theme of this presidency will be: “**Innovation in Education for a Brighter Future**”. To this end,

- This presidency will focus on innovative higher education capacity building efforts in Africa, as well as in conflict and post-conflict zones;
- This presidency will look for new ways to advance peace and conflict resolution through higher education (the seventh principle of the UN Academic Impact);
- This presidency will dedicate itself to promoting new approaches to inter-cultural dialogue and understanding, and the “unlearning” of intolerance through higher education (the tenth principle of the UN Academic Impact);
- This presidency will work to support the internationalization of higher education, by making IAUP a platform for the development of innovative partnership models;
- This presidency will strive to make the global voice of higher education heard throughout the world, by continuing media partnerships such as that with University World News, by participating more actively global forums such as the United Nations, and by establishing an **IAUP World Education Center** to serve as a hub for the development and dissemination innovative, capacity-building ideas for higher education.
- And, this presidency will attract young university leaders full of energy, ideas, and

motivation for change, and give them opportunities to be mentored by veteran leaders who know the ropes and want to give back to the next generation.

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Leading a university usually is not very glamorous.

On some days it resembles the fifth labor of Hercules, cleaning out the Augean Stables.

On other days it resembles Max Weber's apt definition of politics – "the strong and *slow* boring of *hard boards*."

Leading a university is not responsibility that any of us should take lightly and the best advice that I can give to any newly appointed university president, or any aspiring university president, is:

**First: "Keep it personal"**

Michael Adams taught me this and it was because of his personal interest that I, and so many of us, have become part of IAUP.

**Second: "Be humble"**

To quote C.S. Lewis, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."

**And, third: "Show gratitude"**

I am grateful to my Government, Dr. Aleksandre Jejelava, Vice Prime Minister of Georgia, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, thanks for being with us!

Also Mr. Konstantine Zaldastanishvili, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to the Republic of Austria

I am grateful to my colleagues, rectors of Georgian universities, thanks for supporting me!

Dr. George Sharvashidze Rector of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; Dr. Gigi Zedania, Rector of Ilia State University; Dr. Zuran Vadachkoria, Rector of Tbilisi State Medical University and Rima Beridze Vice Rector; Dr. Georgi Gvartadze, Rector of Akaki Tsereteli State University; Dr. Archil Prangishvili, Rector of Georgian Technical University and Vice Rector Ketevan Kokrashvili; Dr. Konstantine Topuria, Chancellor of Georgian University; Dr. Giuli Alsanai, Founder of Georgian University; Dr. Gia Kavtelishvili, Rector of Georgian National University SEU; Dr. Chiloglu Ilyas, Rector of International Black Sea University; Dr. Davit Tepnadze, Vice Rector of Georgian Aviation University.

And I am so very grateful to my own team at Caucasus University, who work so hard to make me look good.

I am grateful also to my new IAUP team, Gerald Reisinger, our Secretary-General, and Nicolette DeVille Christensen, our Treasurer, who are beginning to suspect how hard they will be working during the next three years.

I am grateful to our outgoing team of officers, Toyoshi Satow, Ichiro Tanioka, and Alvaro Romo, for their inspired leadership and dedicated stewardship of IAUP over the past three years, and also to our new officers-elect, Fernando Leon, Fernando Galvan, and Shawn Chen, who can't wait to roll up their sleeves to get to work.

I am grateful to Khatia, my beautiful wife, who helps keep me humble and to my amazing children.

And I am grateful to all of you for giving me this amazing opportunity. Thank you all – let's get to work **together**.