



‘A GLOBAL VOICE FOR A COMMON FUTURE ‘

**THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES**



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IFCU is a value-based federation catering to members working under widely different conditions and facing enormous challenges. Our task is to provide answers to different constituencies, at a time when universities are facing a brave new world of opportunities and disruption, as their mission, their education model, community engagement strategies and funding structures are being transformed. We aim to support global collaboration, binding the voices of our members in a global engagement for robust research and values-driven academic training. CU is a value-based federation catering to members working under widely different conditions and facing enormous challenges. Our task is to provide answers to different constituencies, at a time when universities are facing a brave new world of opportunities and disruption, as their mission, their education model, community engagement strategies and funding structures are being transformed. We aim to support global collaboration, binding the voices of our members in a global engagement for robust research and values-driven academic training.

We are conscious that our future is common or it will not be. The global entanglement of environmental, economical, political, cultural and social challenges force a new role upon universities. Technological disruption is changing the nature of work, modes of sociality and interaction, strategies of political engagement and also the very idea of the human. In this economy, the uses of the university (what is the university for?), the nature of its stakeholders (who is the university for?), the role of organization and strategies (how does the university produce knowledge?) and finally its relevance (how does the university create value(s)?), force upon Federations, such as IFCU, a wider and deeper responsibility.



As a Federation that is global in scope, IFCU’s task is unavoidably that of creating bridges across geographies and social realities, of inducing collaboration across disciplines and modes of knowledge production, fostering spaces of dialogue amongst its members (institutions, researchers, students) and between them and other societal actors. And to do so in the spirit of the Gospel, that enlightens our endeavors. As Pope Francis argues in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Universities are outstanding environments for articulating and developing this evangelizing commitment in an interdisciplinary and integrated way.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 134). To “act in concrete terms”, as he challenges us to do, means to take up challenges where they are diagnosed. To act in concrete terms, then, also means to be ambitious in leveraging global outreach.



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

IFCU's mission is to contribute to the development, transformation and consolidation of Catholic higher education worldwide, working towards the betterment of society, the advancement of learning and the promotion of the humanist values of justice, solidarity and sustainability. The Federation aims to support and promote the intellectual leadership of its members in providing ethically robust answers to the complex issues that face contemporary societies.

## **VALUES**

**PROMOTION OF QUALITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH** – The Federation abides by the best internationally referenced criteria of research and teaching and fosters their reflection in its members' activities keeping in mind that the goal of Catholic higher education is the integral promotion of the person.

**GLOBAL COLLABORATION** – We believe that life-changing science and the education of future-oriented professionals requires collaboration across disciplinary fields and in an internationally robust and networked higher education environment.

**ETHICAL AWARENESS** – Our activities are determined by a commitment to support the deepening of ethical awareness of universities in their relation with internal and external stakeholders and help develop strong ethical integrity guidelines to structure their performance. We are committed to support human dignity, and foster respect in the academic communities, regardless of gender, group, age, religion and ethnicity.

**COMMUNAL ENGAGEMENT** – The global catholicity of our endeavors does not obscure that the primordial responsibility of our members is with their local communities. The Federation will also work to raise the social responsibility practices of its members and support them in the engagement with the communities in which they are embedded

and with the populations they serve, while also promoting a wider dialogue with other societal actors (NGO's, companies, professional associations, government, research institutions).

## SERVICES

**WORLD OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES - IFCU** has developed a global database of Catholic Universities, as well as a collaborative platform to help Catholic Universities establish direct contact with the collaborative projects they wish to put in place.

This project aims to fill a major gap that affects the legitimacy of IFCU, the knowledge of Catholic universities and their visibility at the global level. The project will:

- to have an international database listing and securing reliable and up-to-date information on Catholic higher education institutions around the world;
- Provide a collaborative and interactive platform to meet the needs of Catholic universities in interuniversity cooperation and internalisation.

**THE LAUDATO SI' ENDOWMENT FUND** - Since 2018, IFCU has a funding tool for academic and social cooperation projects. The Laudato Si' Endowment Fund aims to support a policy of developing research programs in the humanities and social sciences in Catholic higher education institutions worldwide.

### **IFCU-CIRAD, a tool for fostering scientific cooperation**

The globalization of international issues is forcing the research community to work from now on at the international level, in order to apprehend problems both in their global dimension but also by considering their local impacts. The IFCU member universities offer the advantage of being present on all continents, to be able to approach research in a multidisciplinary perspective integrating cultural expectations and to be able to work within the framework of International Research Groups, within the International Center of Research and Decision Support (CIRAD). The latter, founded in 1975, aims to promote interuniversity and multidisciplinary research within the framework of international cooperation and offers a space for meetings, debates, intellectual productions and sharing of knowledge...

## TRAINING DEPARTMENT

Higher education is undergoing profound changes: the emergence of a global education market tends to modify the economic models of our universities, making managerial competence increased. Changes in access to knowledge and information, the existence of social networks and the strengthening of communication technologies are changing the relationship to knowledge and knowledge transfer; finally, the field of beliefs is transformed, and compels us to reconsider the Catholic identities of our institutions. With a view to strengthening skills and sharing experiences, IFCU has created an Executive Training Department which offers, each year, in order to enable managers, teachers and researchers to best perform their mission within our Catholic universities.

### Some Training Courses scheduled in 2020

- Social Responsibility of Universities: tools for socially committed Catholic HEI (April, Paris - France)
- The Future of our Universities- Applied Foresight Workshop (March)
- Communication Seminar(May, Rome - Italy)
- The Changing Nature of Quality Assurance in Catholic Universities: an international perspective (June, Rome - Italy)
- Leading Catholic Universities in the 21st Century, 5th Edition (September, Rome - Italy)



## FORESIGHT DEPARTMENT

Around the world, the field of higher education is undergoing profound upheavals, mainly under the impact of technologies for the improvement of human performance and artificial intelligence. The transformations of the workplace and employment that these technologies create force universities to rethink both pedagogical approaches the very nature of the curricula they offer.

IFCU's Foresight Department offers member universities a range of services that focus on developing trends in the higher education sector and the labor market. At the core of these trends are the transformations that the fourth industrial revolution is producing in virtually all fields of employment as well as, consequently, in the very mission of colleges and universities across the world.

One of the key services supplied by the Foresight Unit to its members is the publication of annual reports that aim to keep them aware of ongoing and emerging changes in the labor market and in higher education. *Emerging Technologies in Higher Education and the Workplace: An Assessment*, the 2018 report and first of its kind, offers a broad view of the ways in which artificial intelligence, robotization and other technologies are impacting the nature and range of jobs available in today's economy at large and how this may evolve in the near future, in addition to an overview of the changing global landscape for institutions of higher learning. *Higher Education Today and Tomorrow: A Critical Assessment*, the 2019 report, focuses on some disquieting educational trends that were signaled in the previous report, with a view to fostering a debate among IFCU members and beyond in the higher education community. IFCU has also just released an exclusive foresight study, *The Future of Work and Skills*, which provides a range of possible scenarios accounting for what may change in the world of work and higher education by 2030. This study has been formatted as a booklet that can be used as a training tool by strategic planning teams across IFCU's membership and will serve as a set of guidelines for IFCU's upcoming Foresight training programs.



## Main topics studied

- The Future of work: emerging trends on the labor market and how higher education should evolve to prepare students for the diverse forms of employment that will be available to them in the near future.
- The Future of Learning in Teaching: IFCU proposes to make available to its member universities an array of data that supports reflection on this crucial transition and the ways in which it can be dealt with successfully.
- The Future of Research.



## THE NEWMAN BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK FOR UNIVERSITIES' SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (USR)

The International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) has just created a unique **Benchmarking Framework** that will enable Catholic universities to assess their social responsibility performance.

In recent years, various rankings (Shanghai, Times Higher Education) have emerged to rate universities in an increasingly competitive environment. However, these rankings are based on limited scientific criteria and overlook values that are essential to today's societies.

Echoing a growing number of initiatives around the world to promote USR, the Newman Benchmarking Framework is a viable assessment alternative that brings in a holistic approach to assess higher education institutions. By conveying principles and values that are in line with the humanist and Catholic tradition of the Church, this tool places the notion of responsibility at the heart of university life and of the entire community.

The Framework is the result of a two-year collaborative endeavor and includes some 160 indicators and twenty criteria sorted into 4 main areas:

- institutional governance
- environmental protection efforts
- university practices as an employer and with regard to the implementation of its "three missions"
- overall consistency with regard to institutional identity

Thanks to a partnership with the Swiss GMAP Center think tank, the Newman Benchmarking Framework is the first of its kind to rely on the use of artificial intelligence in order to offer an evaluation system that is both dynamic and respectful of the context diversity of universities. Access to this evaluation and foresight tool will enable universities to take stock of both their current and USR performance and future trends, while obtaining solid data enabling them to redefine their institutional development strategies.





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