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The role of university research: a reflection*

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Dear authorities of the university and of the Facultades de Medicina, Estomatología y Enfermería, directors and members of the different departments of the university and of those faculties, professors, researchers, and students of the university:

We are here to award internally funded research grants won in a competitive process. It is a pleasure to reaffirm the commitment of our faculties and of the university to research, and thus confirm the identity of a research university such as ours.

You must have learned that two dominant profiles of the modern university institution were configured in Europe during the 19th century: i) the French Napoleonic model focused mainly on the solid education of many citizens; and ii) the German Humboldtian model, featuring the centers in which knowledge was produced, and they taught what they produced. This was the model that, at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, gave rise to the Great Research Universities in the United States. It was about those universities that conduct important research and that nowadays are considered great universities in that country. Independent of San Marcos, the emerging Cayetano of the 1960s had enough lineage in terms of researchers and collaborative connections to be the first research university in Peru. And over time, despite the challenge of our chronic financial limitation, Cayetano has been consolidating as such.

The growing competition among universities, derived from the onslaught of corporate companies, influences the evaluation of research, whose bibliometric logic is degraded and becomes susceptible to the effect of regrettable forms of authorship and patent trafficking that have been destroying this system, as they have led to certain levels of tolerance for the lack of scientific integrity of researchers that can be observed in many centers. Cynical commercial and labor pressures, at the institutional and individual level, end up caricaturing the current merit indicators and affecting serious institutions such as ours, which could no longer count on

Cite as:

Cáceres CF. The role of
university research: a reflection.
Rev Estomatol Herediana. 2024;
34(2): 103-104.
DOI: 10.20453/reh.v34i2.5527

Received: April 26, 2024

Accepted: May 26, 2024

Online: June 29, 2024



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*Remarks from the Vice-Rector of Research at Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia at the winners ceremony of the Research Support Fund of the Facultades de Medicina, de Estomatología y de Enfermería.

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the *rankings* as relevant references and would have to advocate the use of other more appropriate indicators. We could say that all this happens in a world that, by frivolously extolling research as infallible, ends up forgetting that what it represents is an endless search for truth, which we believe we are getting closer to, but which is, by definition, unattainable. Indeed, all our scientific truths are temporary truths —as Thomas Kuhn explained—, which will eventually be falsified in new studies, according to Karl Popper's epistemology. This is something we should always remember when we feel compelled to despise other forms of knowledge that are less systematic but each possessing its own richness. An extreme version of such arrogance is scientism, a form of cult of scientific knowledge that ends up dogmatizing it, thus denying the very nature of science itself.

And in this context, let us keep in mind that the current university system encourages us to forget that many research projects that discover or create technology

will have an impact on society only if we complete technology transfer processes, which applies not only to devices, but also to synthetic drugs and other patentable results. And, finally, the convulsions of today's world should not make us forget the importance for science to respect the criteria of research ethics, which derive from the promise adopted at Nuremberg, to the effect that knowledge tainted with the violation of the human rights of participants in a study will never ever be produced again, a promise that now tends to include the disproportionate and unjustified suffering of experimental animals.

The departments of the Vice-Rectorate for Research try to support researchers on these and other issues. Visit us. Congratulations to all faculties, the Unidad Integrada de Gestión en Investigación, Ciencia y Tecnología (UIGICT) and all winners for their efforts. We hope you can reach a good conclusion.

Thank you very much.