



2001 IUS REPORT

DIAGNOSIS

DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO
ROME

PRESENTATION

1. Positive evaluation of IUS

Admittedly, we confess our highly positive opinion on the study object– Salesian University Institutions (IUS) – as analyzed in the “2001 IUS REPORT”. We will now illustrate some of the reasons underlying our opinion.

- Even though this was not an initial aim, these days IUS have become a **major reality** for the whole life and mission of the Salesian Congregation.
- The founding fathers were driven by a **typically Salesian spirit of initiative**, characterized by insight, courage, hard, relentless work and, at times, by a touch of individualist pioneering spirit.
- We are convinced this is **another sign of the presence of the Spirit**, leading Don Bosco’s children to use their charisma, as a pastoral action of the Church, within the university, where youth, education and science-culture are gathered. So far, this had been little explored by Salesians.
- Also, this is not a new frontier competing with other forces. To the Congregation, this is a **“significant presence”** to put it according to the Rector Major’s words in his letter *I study for you* (point 3). In his words, we dare to state that, for the whole of the Salesian mission, this presence may become *strategic and profitable*, other than significant. “Appropriate, right skills are today demanded by the diversification and complexity of education, implying more consolidated practices as well as a more practical, wider knowledge. A weak professional quality impoverishes the educational proposal, the significance of our work and, with its deterioration, it might leave us out of the educational field. We perceive this danger especially in some areas where novelties are more evident, such as social communication, the *university world*, youth distress” (Ibiden).

2. Improving our actions

A highly positive evaluation like ours could give the impression that we passively accept all activities performed by IUS or that we tacitly invite to proceed as we have done so far, experiencing an endless growth that does not follow any specific direction. Nothing could be more distant from our views. If there is one task calling for our best energy, it is an effort to make the **quality** dimension

visible, unquestionable and influential in terms of *approach, action plans and results*. More specifically, we are referring to two major dimensions.

- An ongoing debate to get a series of common references that – in a balanced fashion, synergistically with the other actions carried on by the Congregation – can highlight the ***specific role of Salesians within the University*** in terms of aims, *objectives and style*. Hopefully, such reference picture, with the collaboration of us all, can be offered by the Rector Major and the Council through the *identity and specific characteristics of IUS and a University policy of the Congregation for the years to come*.

- The formulation – or reformulation, if needed – of the ***institutional project*** of each university fulfilling such identity and policy; in this way, we will get a practical guide to every day activity. We want to avoid those routine behaviors that are so far from one's good initial intentions, as well as sterile improvisations, waste of time and energy, or unnecessary risks.

3. The diagnostic effort

The above listed tasks cannot be fulfilled without a number of preliminary efforts. For the first time ever, we have plenty of information on IUS, as shown by the 2001 IUS REPORT. It is not enough: it is necessary to ***diagnose*** the existing situation. We are willing to take some risk, following two principles or action criteria.

- number one. To think in terms of ***Congregation*** and not in terms of each individual center.

- number two. To avoid repeating obvious concepts and be excessively detailed, it is necessary to have in mind a complete ***picture of Salesian and university references***. That is to say: we should not lose sight of the orderly thematic pattern presented in the 2001 IUS REPORT.

The elaboration of such diagnosis has two dimensions:

- number one. Identification of the ***strengths and weaknesses*** of IUS, as explained in the Report.

- number two. In the light of the existing strengths and weaknesses, it is key to highlight those that are truly ***crucial and strategic*** so that the Salesian presence within the university, through our own centers, can be really significant.

4. Working paper to perform the diagnosis

The strengths and weaknesses of IUS do not pretend they are “the” diagnosis; they should rather be seen as a working tool, a stimulus for a rigorous, honest work. The paper’s structure is the same as the 2001 IUS REPORT.

REFERENCE PICTURE (I)

5. Fact: an extraordinary development of IUS

The Report recalls that IUS have developed to an extraordinary extent (cf. 1.3). Four aspects are worth recalling.

5.1. Undoubtedly, this is a sign of **vitality** of the Congregation and of its charismatic **loyalty** : it helps the target beneficiaries, where they are, offering the services that they need at any time and under any historic circumstances.

5.2. Yet, in our view this has been **too fast a growth**:

- in terms of the *number of centers*, often times without having an appropriate basis in terms of project, financial and human resources;
- in terms of the *number of students* per center, especially in the largest ones; given such a high number, many times no personal attention can be offered or guaranteed.

Such growth has been too fast, considering the lack of experience of the Congregation, the requirements of the university, the available forces and resources.

5.3. This phenomenon has occurred so **spontaneously and in an isolated fashion, that**, until the present Report, it was not widely known within the Congregation itself, nor was its real size known to all. We conclude that no *planning and estimate* had been performed by the central and regional-Provinces of the Congregation or, in some cases, by the local –Provinces.

5.4. In the creation and development of IUS we observed a ***trend to address to older beneficiaries***, unlike the common practice and tradition followed by the Congregation (cf. Report, 18.3). This is undoubtedly a positive element, since these are young people proper, at a time in their life in which they make major decisions from a professional and vocational standpoint (see point 15 of this document, last paragraph). At the same time, this phenomenon should be interpreted, measured and assessed – its meaning, needs and consequences – also relative to the other fields and working methods followed by the Congregation with youth (volunteers, faith groups of young adults, etc.).

6. IUS inspiring principles

6.1. The inspiring principles that lead to the creation of IUS are based on the ***typical criteria of the Salesian mission***, of social, educational and pastoral nature (cf. Report, 2).

6.2. Nonetheless, ***reality is more complex***. The most obvious reasons should be considered alongside those motives that generally remain hidden or that are regarded as minor. They all have an impact when one decides to open a university center. We will list just a few of them, by way of example:

- the natural trend to the growth and development of existing school institutions, without measuring the nature of the new situation and its impact;
- the evolution of the school market that, for different reasons, is characterized by the lack of students of a given age group and, subsequently, leads to look for students of a different age;
- exploitation of buildings and equipment that remain unused;
- greater solvency and financial security.

It is necessary to think about the ***real weight*** of each of these reasons on the establishment of each university institution.

7. The mission as seen in IUS statutes

7.1. Generally speaking, the mission is formulated:

- in terms of ***education*** and not just of study, with no consideration of other human and christian formation;

- three clear references exist: to the student, as a **“person”** and not just as a youth looking for a professional qualification, to the local **society-community** the center is part of, and, finally, to the **Church** (cf. Report, 6.1);
- the frequent repetition of a number of **common principles**: Don Bosco’s “good christians and honest citizens”, the Preventive or Salesian educational system, the human and christian formation, the merging of faith and culture, the critical study of phenomena and of human, social reality to be able to transform them in the light of the Gospel (cf. Report, 6.2).

7.2. To our eyes, such a formulation of the Salesian mission looks nearly identical as schools’; we do not see any novelty or differentiation, as one might logically expect in the university world, that is indeed very different. On the other hand, this formulation does not seem to develop in the university daily practice. In our opinion, this remains a **challenge to be met**.

8. Preferred beneficiaries

8.1. According to the analytical data (cf. Report, 7, 33.3, 33.4), IUS take care of students that the Salesian mission considers **preferred beneficiaries** because of their belonging to low, middle-low and middle social classes.

8.2. However, we perceive a **twofold risk** that is worth our focus.

- We believe that some IUS institutional projects are actually unfeasible or, at least, very **hard to realize** in that they are utopian: in other words, while they are addressed to the disadvantaged classes of poor or bankrupt countries, the academing offering is of a very high quality and is consequently very costly. This may lead to failure or, even worse, to the frustration of the Congregation as the promoting institution, should such projects later address to more privileged classes to gather enough funds.
- The opposite occurs in university centers: most students belong to middle-high social classes, the only ones that show a cultural preparation to access the university, and, financially, can bear its cost. It may happen that, in the same Province, different services are offered to marginalized people. In this case, the risk of a sterile, charismatic separation exists, unless a university project can

integrate the different services that are, as a whole, the expression of the only Salesian mission possible.

9. Disadvantages and advantages of IUS “youth”

9.1. As a matter of fact, the Congregation has no experience and long-standing tradition in the university approach and management. Therefore, the risk exists that “stranger”, even obsolete models, are created and produced.

9.2. Precisely because the Salesian Congregation is not yet affected by the burden of huge universities or a hardly manageable routine work, the opportunity exists to set up its university presence in a different, new, streamlined, essential way, focussing on well selected fields that have a future. This could be a guideline for the coming years.

10. IUS phenomenon: how to know and address it

While we believe the institutional unpreparedness can be seen as a weakness vis-a-vis the creation and development of IUS (cf. 5.3), the temporary service made available to IUS by the Rector Major and the Council is quite **advisable and timely**. Based on the knowledge we have acquired over the last three years, such an intervention, years ago, would not have found the eco or sensitivity that are actually required. Conversely, postponing this initiative would amount to clash against the difficult control and channeling of energy of a fire that has become wild and powerful. However, we believe it is necessary to **keep working as we have done in the** 1998-2001 period, with new projects, until our university presence becomes well rooted and in line with what the Congregation deems most appropriate for its mission in the years to come (in particular, reference is made to guidelines that the Rector Major and Council will issue about the IUS “Identity” and the “policy” guiding our common action).

UNIVERSITY ACTIVITY (II)

11. The alignment of curricula to the Salesian mission

Looking at the list of 520 curricula offered by IUS, you immediately get a feeling that they are just too many and that they may have little to do with the Salesian mission proper. However, there exist curricula that are certainly closer to the Salesian mission (science of education, communication, theology- pastoral and catechesis, technology ...). These are attended by 62% of total IUS students (41.540) (cf. Report, 10 - 11).

12. The academic level

13.1. It is impossible to have a consistent academic level across all IUS. It is rather necessary to refer to different scientific and academic requirements, according to the cultural tradition of the different countries. Each IUS should be seen within its context and compared to university centers within the same environment, both within the same country and, mostly importantly, within the region. From this perspective, we have seen that IUS quality, as a **whole, is remarkable**. In most cases, IUS are regarded as some of the most important **quality centers** locally.

12.2. Yet, there is a limit to growth and improvement, given the university requirements in terms of demand and quality. Many centers used to be secondary or vocational schools of renowned prestige. They used to be good, even outstanding schools: now, they have made a big step to the university level. While they have become university institutions, they **keep being schools** in conceptual and management terms. This situation should be corrected with an eye to the university mindset, spirit, needs and style, without losing the best heritage that they gained as schools. On the contrary, such heritage needs to be adjusted and transformed.

13. Scientific research and production

- Even the few IUS that stem out as quality centers in terms of scientific research and production admit that there is still much to do to achieve acceptable levels and be acknowledged in a given field. Quite simply, most IUS have not

addressed the research dimension seriously enough, while they have dedicated their energy to teach and transfer knowledge. This is why we observe a **deficiency by** IUS in what, in the best university tradition, should be their first and foremost commitment (cf. Report, II B and C).

- This “having nearly all to do” should constitute a challenging collective stimulus for IUS; such a challenge should be addressed with a collective effort, allocating the available resources to **research in fields that look closer to the Salesian mission**, to serve society and the Church, and also to have an authoritative voice heard within the national and international academic community.

14. The academic, human and religious training

As to the academic, human and religious training opportunities offered by IUS, both the academic communities and Salesian inspectors have expressed a **favorable opinion, of** the highest level. (Cf. Report, 43). However, we want to focus on the increasing **dissatisfaction** they have also expressed, in terms of academic, human and religious training. This is something we wish to stress for two main reasons:

- It is quite telling in terms of the sensitivity and perceptions of the target (students and teachers), possibly not entirely understood,
- and for the opportunity that university training represents for vocational guidance, taking care of both the professional and also the human/religious aspects; at the same time, it is key not to reject any vocational proposals from secular people who are engaged in social and/or religious activities.

15. The university pastoral action

The university pastoral action proper has not been specifically addressed in this Report, since we believe it to be a **“horizontal axis”** of the university institutional project of each Salesian center – it should be educational and pastoral per se – and also because a detailed discussion goes beyond our initial objective. Conversely, we paid much attention to it during our visit to the different centers. Everywhere there is someone responsible for this, and they do something (“we do what we can” is the most common expression). We noticed a number of details that will now be summarized:

- What is pastoral generally complies with a **very generic formulation** in projects or action plans.
- Even though any pastoral action has some limitations at university level – including the most traditional forms – in actuality and in practice we believe that it **does not constitute the prime concern** and not even one of the most important concerns of IUS daily activities.
- Those who work in the pastoral area generally follow an isolated, **sectorial approach, with limited means**: any other initiative is likely to receive a higher priority in the budget.
- We can recollect just one case where the pastoral action is planned as an **essential element of the institutional project**, across the university of which it becomes an integral part; it really reaches the organization and structure, the economy, plans, teachers, cultural debate, relations within the community, human attention. It is a pastoral action for catholics, without forgetting those who follow other worships or religions or non-believers.

HUMAN RESOURCES (IV)

16. Management

We are glad to confirm that most IUS management staff – SDB, FMA or lay staff – are **competent, qualified, enthusiast and committed** to the Salesian mission. We are not as sure whether these people are best IUSed to effect the change we indicated under point 12.2 of this document (cf. Report, 41).

17. Management staff

As to teachers, five remarks are especially important:

- *Qualifications*. Within IUS, there is a clear **deficiency of eligible qualifications** to teach and do research at university level: few have a master's degree, especially in America and Asia (cf. Report, 20.2). On the other hand, it is unlikely one can achieve a university “standardization” and qualification of centers in the absence of such requirement.

- *Commitment.* A mere 26% of teachers works full time for IUS. On the contrary, **44% work part time, i.e. less than** 20 hours a week (cf. Report, 20.3). While this approach clearly allows to cover any teaching requirement, it does not favor either research activities or students' care; let alone the integration into a Salesian cultural and pedagogic project.

- *Institutional project.* We observed a marked lack of knowledge of the center institutional project and the Salesian pedagogic system on the part of teachers, and even of the relationship between the center and the Salesian Congregation (cf. Report, 45).

- *Number.* 4,251 university teachers are **more than enough** in terms of selection, care and continuing training etc. The faculty is supposed to be the main asset of institutions (cf. Report, 20, 1). Yet, we believe the current situation is unacceptable and calls for urgent actions.

- *Background.* As to the individual, practical knowledge of the spirit and educational Salesian system, many IUS teachers often times are former IUS students; however, it is important that their resumé shows some previous experience with other centers and universities to avoid the risk of endogamy.

18. Salesian staff

- *Number and distribution.* In principle, it is our belief that the proportion of Salesians out of the total IUS staff or the number of teachers and students is not a problem (cf. Report, 22.1), especially if you compare this figure with other institutions. However, the *deficiency is particularly alarming* when you notice that: a) the distribution of Salesians across IUS is **not homogeneous**: in fact, most Salesians are concentrated in few institutions accounting for a small proportion of the total number of students; b) "own" human resources are scanty and **little exploited**, since their influence or repercussion on the rest of the IUS system is just minimal.

As for the future, it would be advisable to provide for a more flexible, versatile distribution – not necessarily homogeneous – of the Salesian staff, in order to have a greater impact on the whole of IUS.

- *Qualifications.* In our view, Salesians' qualifications as university teachers are not particularly problematic (cf. Report, 22.2). However, Provinces should

urgently draft a longer term **“coordinated plan”** . Preparing a university teacher is difficult and time consuming. Also, it takes a long time to get a professional-scientific standing, which is possible only through the daily practice. Should in-house resources be insufficient, we might plan to make an investment in outside resources, to be carefully selected.

- *Commitment*. The variable the most affects the number of Salesians working for the whole of IUS is their time commitment, **inadequate** from every perspective. It is particularly alarming in America, where 53% of Salesians work for less than twenty hours a week (cf. Report, 22.3).

- *Function*. The Report (cf. 22,4) shows plenty of figures on the functions played by Salesians within IUS. We do not want to express a general evaluation, that would sound obvious or too biased. However, Provinces should never give up their responsible role in the management of such institutions. They should focus their attention on a) the formulation of good **institutional projects**, the best starting point (it should not be taken for granted or be seen as an easy task); b) the appointment of **talented people** to key positions; in this respect, it is more important to count on the **competence and dependability** of people rather than on their belonging to the Congregation or the Salesian Family. In this fashion, many Salesians could cover roles and positions better suited to their specific skills.

- *Age*. Out of the 319 Salesians working for the whole of IUS, as mentioned in the Report (cf. 22.5), 153 are older than 55. This means that there is **little leeway** to replace them in a few years. Generally speaking, a negative influence comes from Europe, accounting for two thirds of the staff.

- *The six variables as a whole*. We presented the individual problems concerning the Salesian staff: number and distribution, commitment, qualifications, positions, age. While no individual aspect is insurmountable per se, the most severe problem is posed by the simultaneous implementation of such inter-related variables. An analogy: someone whose clinical picture is not severe, if you take each individual symptom, may be in a critical situation if you sum up all of the

existing symptoms. Hence, we suggest to perform a monographic study of the Salesian staff working within the universities, with the collaboration of every Province: this could be helpful to make the best decisions favoring a common heritage and mission in a globalized world.

INFRASTRUCTURES and SERVICES (V)

19. Libraries

A library is a key infrastructure for any good school institution. Our Report (cf. 25) highlights the **excellence** of some and the **poor quality** of many. It is essential to make big investments in this field. Yet, we also recommend to: a) invest more in the use and preservation of the structure than in physical facilities; b) to strongly favor communication technologies, to allow access to multiple information sources worldwide.

20. Communication and information technology networks (ITC)

Communication and information technology (ITC) have incredibly developed over the last few years; they have been popularized in most industrial societies and not only in these latter. Higher education is changing more slowly, even though it is as important: in fact, ITC are seen as one of the major outside factors that may change the face of universities in the years to come. Given this perspective, what about IUS and their opportunities?

- computerization and internet connection are by now **common** in the vast majority of IUS, even though there is still room for improvement (cf. Report, 26). More specifically: computer and networks are most used in those IUS that are located in less developed countries, rather than in the so called advanced societies.

- IUS show a telecommunication and computer problem in the sense that these technologies have not been **fully and finally incorporated in** teaching, research and communication within the university. In other words, teachers have not yet learned to properly use IT or to avail themselves of information technologies as a didactic tool. Things are even worse in terms of understanding this contemporary

cultural phenomenon, which is indeed essential for an educational institution. IUS have not **encouraged enough** their teachers to make use of these technologies.

- This stimulus is certainly important: it will allow IUS to be better off in following and adjusting the various centers to the future conditions, characterized by new **types and patterns, light, more flexible universities**. Technology networks are enriched and made more complete by another element: university networks (see point 22 of this document).

EXTERNAL RELATIONS (VI)

21. External relations: the present situation

The closed, inward attitude of several IUS depends on what has been outlined under point 12.2 of this document, relative to their way of acting as if they were lower level schools. Again, it is important to stress the **limited external relations** of IUS, in contrast with the openness and collaboration that constitute key elements in the university spirit (cf. Report, Chap.VI). At the same time, we observed a **good availability** to open up and collaborate, which was particularly evident during the realization of the “Common program” (1998-2001). This is just a beginning: hopefully, this trend will expand and continue to the benefit of all IUS.

22. University networks

Globalization and economic integration processes have made an impact on every dimension of human activity, including the university. The development of **cooperation among universities through networks** has been stimulated by the social and cultural environment in which universities carry out their academic and scientific work. This development highlights the growing need for cooperation mechanisms.

We invite all IUS to play an active role in university networks.

- First of all, ***all IUS should put in place a net of multiple collaborative efforts***, regardless of their association or federation status. Such a network should be the outcome of strategic alliances and cooperation based on specific objectives of different nature: among IUS in the same country, same continent, linguistic area, disciplines, without ruling out a possible global cooperation in specific subjects of interest to all. With time, such interchange and collaboration should be conducive to the affirmation of the true Salesian personality and presence in the university arena.
- This form of “internal network” should not be an obstacle to the establishment of ***other networks***, favoring the collaboration with catholic universities in particular.

ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL SITUATION (VII)

23. Financial health

The Report (cf. 37, last paragraph) indicates that IUS economic aspects are the only ones that are regularly checked by Provinces. Such a control is reflected in the financial health of most IUS. We simply recommend to pay more attention to the few IUS that show a “continued”, slight yearly deficit or a profit that seems a bit too high, requiring more accurate checks (cf. Report, 31,1).

24. Funding sources

To the exception of those IUS that operate as a “training house” and are directly supported by Provinces, the major funding source is the fee paid by students. However, it is important to underline the opportunity to increase revenues through different sources, such as the provision of ***services to third parties***. To most IUS, this is still insignificant, further demonstrating how far they are, in terms of research and teaching, from the production system (cf. Report, 32.2). Should this revenue source increase in the future, it shall be appropriately entered into university budgets, avoiding any “submerged” economy-like practice.

25. Types of investment

Any university needs to invest in a number of areas. Amongst these latter, land and buildings are particularly significant. Also, they are less profitable, given the public service element that is attached to any educational activity. While space and buildings are necessary, we have seen in a number of IUS, once again, the **traditional Salesian trend to erect buildings** as the first measure to solve any problem of space and roominess. This practice – with special reference to buildings – should be reviewed and changed. All over the world, universities (and, more generally, service institutions) are trying to become more flexible and streamlined facilities (land, buildings and space) which is why they are willing to adopt a more functional and practical approach.

As to investment, we recommend IUS to give priority to two specific areas: a) **the staff continuing education** – teachers, services and administrative staff –; b) technologies – especially **technology networks (ITC)** (see point 20) – not only in terms of equipment but also in terms of staff training, for a more profitable use of the latest technology aid.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (VIII)

26. Institutional projects

The Institutional project – which is not a mere collection of statutes or regulations – is the main instrument to guide, rule and manage institutions. The Report (cf. 45, last paragraph) demonstrates that the content of IUS “institutional project” is actually unknown to the academic communities concerned. Since most IUS do have such an instrument available, it is quite alarming to notice a pronounced lack of knowledge of its contents. On the contrary, the institutional project can guide effectively and visibly the daily life of the entire institution.

Only in exceptional cases, IUS do have “Salesian university institutional projects” proper. Rather, they adopt formulations that are more or less in line with the applicable law, with no clear and complete view of the elements summarized in

the table of contents of this Report. Also, the theoretical principles do not reflect in the different curricula, in their content or in the organization. Our recommendation is that this effort should be one of the ***fundamental commitments of IUS for the coming years.***

27. Institutional verification, academic and educational quality

As to what IUS do in terms of institutional verification (cf. Report, 37), they clearly suffer from a huge delay in achieving a ***“culture of continuing verification”*** promoted through the “Common program” (cf. 311 and 312). Yet, we believe this is a proper instrument to constantly stimulate the improvement of IUS educational and academic quality, as a sign of loyalty to the institutional project. In the aftermath of the present Report, within the framework of a collaborative effort between two universities, an ***“online consulting office”*** was established to help IUS in this significant area. Along the same line, it would be advisable to adopt an external ***accreditation process***. As an option, IUS might put in place their own accreditation system.

RELATIONS WITH PROVINCES (X)

28. University-Province relation (Salesian Congregation) and viceversa

Over and above the size or number of IUS within the framework of the Congregation and the acknowledgement of their work by the Rector Major and the Council, Inspectors and others, the Salesian presence at university level will not be an ***integral part of the Salesian mission*** as long as all Salesian ***“legitimize”*** such presence. They should consider it as fully in line with other dimensions. Both parties should make a honest effort to arrive at such legitimacy.

The Report (cf. 47 and 48) offers sufficient elements to understand the real situation of university-Province relationships. Here, Province means the “inspector community” of brethren. Overall, such relationship could be regarded as ***“acceptable”***; nonetheless, ***it is not sufficient and much remains to be done***. Hence, we propose the following.

- The university should be ***an integral part of the Province's educational-pastoral project***, without any reluctance or ambiguity. No harmonious, "productive" integration with the project will be possible, unless brethren and Province's management acknowledge the unique nature of the university. To be part of the provincial project implies that everybody are familiar with its aim and activity, agree upon the major guidelines, and finally, its services are acknowledged by the other institutions reporting to the Province etc.

- It would be beneficial if the university, in addition to its specific functions, could be given a ***strategic role*** within the project (cf. Report, 47, paragraph 7°), so that the provision of services becomes clear and concrete. Such a strategic function should be planned for the whole of IUS relative to the Congregation.

- As to the ordinary operation of the university, it should function as an ***institution*** ensuring the continuity of projects.

Rome, 8 July 2001

Carlos GARULO

Delegate of the Rector Major for IUS