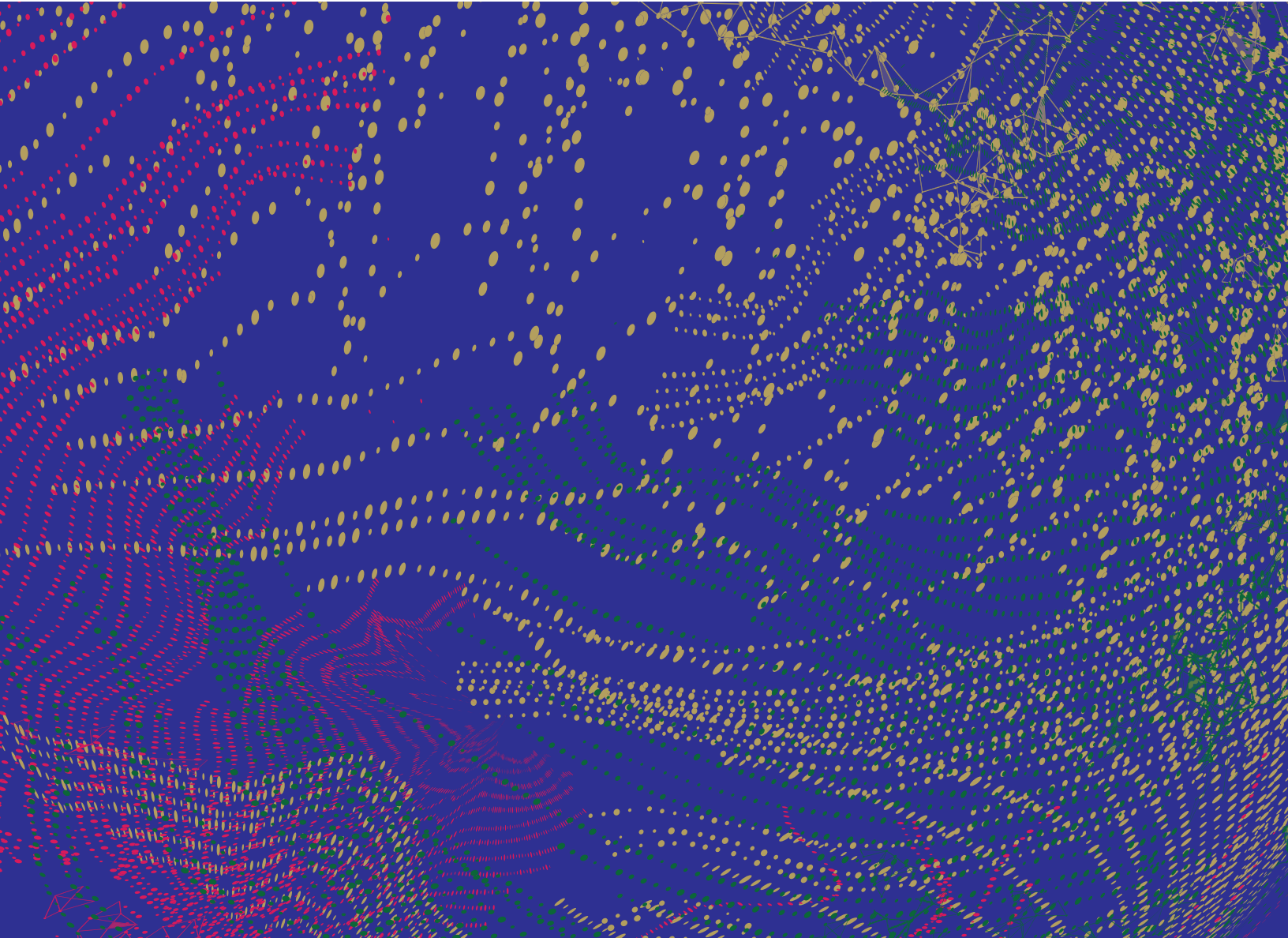


The World Humanities Report

# The Humanities in the Southern Cone: A Report

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Montevideo Group University Association



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# The Humanities in the Southern Cone: A Report

Montevideo Group University Association

To contextualize this document, a contribution to the World Humanities Report, it is necessary to describe the geography and institutions that its findings cover: twenty of the member universities of the Montevideo Group University Association (AUGM). Founded in 1991, AUGM is a network of forty public universities spanning six countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Its main objective is to create a shared and expansive academic, scientific, technological, educational, and cultural space.

In 2019 the AUGM entered a cooperation agreement with the International Council on Philosophy and Humanistic Science (CIPSH), demonstrating the value of the humanities and the humanistic traditions consolidated within our network of universities. This tie with CIPSH<sup>1</sup> initiated our institutional involvement with the World Humanities Report, which added a section on South America to the Report. These six South American countries do not constitute a subregion in and of themselves, although they do correspond to a subregion of MERCOSUR and, at least in part, to what is considered the Southern Cone.

The primary source of information for this report was a survey of the member universities of the AUGM carried out in 2020, which we will discuss later. Based on this quantitative data, this report provides an analysis of the wide range of the disciplines and themes that these universities define as and identify with the humanities.

The following table shows the number of AUGM member universities in each country as well as the number of academic units (colleges, centers, institutes, etc.) that are identified with the humanities by this study because they confer degrees, support research, or engage in university outreach and extension.

<sup>1</sup> The relationship with CIPSH was facilitated by the UNESCO Chair on Borders and Migrations (UNITWIN Program) at the Federal University of Santa Maria, State of Rio Grande do Sul (RGS), Brazil.

Country	No. of universities in the AUGM	Number of academic units that correspond to the humanities as defined by this study, with degrees (programs), research, and university outreach
Argentina	14	60 colleges with multiple degrees (programs)
Bolivia	2	9 colleges with multiple degrees (programs)
Brazil	15	60 academic units dedicated to studies linked to the humanities, among colleges, institutes, and departments
Chile	4	15 colleges with multiple degrees (programs)
Paraguay	4	12 colleges with multiple degrees (programs)
Uruguay	1	7 colleges with multiple degrees (programs)

## Survey of the Member Universities of the AUGM

The survey that is the primary source of the information provided in this report was sent to the member universities of the AUGM. We received responses from twenty-one universities (here called participating institutions), which make up 52.5 percent of the total number of the AUGM members. Although partial, the sample can be categorized as significant.

The survey comprised questions about the institutions as well as the general situation in the country in which they are located.

## Synthesis of the Responses from the Participating Institutions concerning the Growth of and Challenges Facing the Humanities

### *What areas make up the field of the humanities?*

Based on the institutions' responses we sought to highlight convergences rather than divergences, since what the humanities encompass is a complicated question on which consensus is difficult to reach. Our findings are listed below:

letters (literature); linguistics (first and acquired languages); philosophy (ethics, epistemology); history; geography; education (education science, pedagogy, and teacher training); anthropology (cultural and social anthropology, archaeology); social sciences (sociology, politics, economics and accounting sciences, law, social work, administration); the arts (visual arts, performing arts, music, theory and history of art, cinematography, audiovisual production); social communication and semiology; architecture and design; cultural heritage, tourism, and gastronomy

### *How many researchers are active in the field of the humanities?*

It was not possible to produce the exact number of researchers as participating institutions differed on whether they included research centers in their responses.

*What is the relationship of the humanities with other knowledge areas in your institution?*

Some, albeit not all, universities have favored interdisciplinary work when providing funding for research projects. This supports the interdisciplinarity of the humanities and its contribution to the comprehensive nature of professional training within the university.

Some universities have integrated humanities fields into other majors, such as in the fields of technology and health. These partnerships pertain to the curriculums of undergraduate degree programs of academic units that house these areas of knowledge, but also through research collaboration as well as the co-management of graduate studies.

Collaborative work also happens during interventions into social problems with shared problematics. In many cases these initiatives span all knowledge areas in the institution whose principal aim is to develop and establish pedagogical ties.

*What is the priority (or what are the priorities) for the field of the humanities? In other words, how are the humanities situated in relation to other fields?*

The expansion of the humanities' areas of study has resulted in the extension of their influence over diverse problematics: environment, cultural heritage, inequality as well as social and institutional violence, philosophical debates of social and political nature, approaches to cultural and gender diversity, among other topics of undeniable relevance. Connections have been established with diverse fields of knowledge: health sciences, food production invested in the development of sustainable economic endeavors, legal and social sciences, artistic disciplines, the study of the conditions of rural and urban populations, to name just a few.

The humanities are positioned, in the context of the other fields, as having their own identity, exercising their presence with their due authority in the knowledge areas they encompass. They have also created close ties with other fields for the purpose of the holistic development of science and knowledge at the university.

However, as already mentioned, the humanities are not a priority in terms of the distribution and allocation of resources for their development.

*In the next five years, what are the ten most relevant topics and knowledge fields that should be developed? What areas should UNESCO favor in terms of project support?*

**1. New technologies applied in education**

- a) Digital education
- b) Development of information and communication technologies
- c) Education
- d) Cultures of peace
- e) Innovation and curricular updates: intercultural knowledge, the internationalization of the curriculum
- f) Digital humanities

**2. Civic education**

- a) Education as a fundamental right
- b) Policies oriented toward gender equality and the expansion of rights
- c) Assessment of situations of child and juvenile vulnerability
- d) Public speaking
- e) Human rights and the media

**3. Cities and strategies for sustainable development**

- a) Poverty and territory
- b) Climate change

**4. History, heritage, and cultural identity**

- a) Cultural diversity
- b) Documentation and preservation of cultural goods

**5. Latin American social studies, migrations, borders and boundaries**

- a) Strategies for cultural translation
- b) Local and Indigenous knowledge systems (Indigenous education, Indigenous languages)

**6. Effects of globalization on culture**

- a) National and ethnic identities
- b) Threats posed by racism
- c) New forms of political and ideological authoritarianism
- d) The humanities and the strengthening of democracy

### **7. Needs of high school students**

- a) Students' mental health
- b) Emotional development in childhood
- c) Inclusion for disabilities

### **8. Approaches to the field of the humanities**

- a) Disciplinary and interdisciplinary boundaries; the humanities in connection, in difference, and in dialogue with other sciences and forms of knowledge
- b) Interaction between natural and social sciences

### **9. Conceptual bases of public policy**

- a) Access to knowledge and culture
- b) Critical reflection on technology, on the social structures and processes within which they are developed, and the way in which they impact daily life

### **10. Art, culture, and society**

- a) Promotion of research in the arts
- b) Generation of spaces of transdisciplinarity for a more integrated knowledge that is transversal and in constant connection with the community

*Do you find it appropriate that the AUGM promotes the creation of a South American Humanities Network?*

All of the surveyed universities consider it desirable for the AUGM to promote the creation of a Humanities Network at the regional level.

### **Synthesis of the Responses to Questions about Different Countries' Public Policy toward the Humanities**

The survey sought to learn as much as possible about the situation of the countries where the member universities are located and to identify relevant national and regional issues.

*What is the priority (or what are the priorities) for the field of the humanities? In other words, how are the humanities situated in relation to other fields?*

In general, the public policies of supporting and financing research privilege, directly or indirectly, competencies that result in students' success in the labor market, at the expense of the development of critical skills and strategies for understanding the complexity of social and cultural phenomena.



“Classic” humanities form part of the curriculum in primary and secondary education. However, governmental aims for education are permeated by an opposition between humanistic thought and the application of technological know-how that yields immediate results: these priorities result in proposals for curricular change that attempt to eliminate or modify the time dedicated to courses considered “useless” as they are not fundamental to the economy and labor market. In this way, an opposition is created between teaching and research in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and the humanities. It is an enormous challenge for the field of humanities to make the usefulness of its knowledges to society evident.

Unlike other areas whose technological application legitimizes social investment with clearly defined objectives (the prevention or healing of illness, the improvement of productivity or efficiency of some economic sector, etc.), the field of the humanities has yet to find the best way to show their relevance. We can see this in the state’s priorities in the calls for applications for funding and scholarships such as those offered in Chile for graduate work either domestically or abroad in 2018 and 2019.<sup>2</sup>

*What types of promotion, if any, exist for the development of the humanities (including funding and investment)?*

In general, the answers show the lower level of funding (in terms of scholarships, training, and resources, for example) compared to other areas of knowledge. With respect to mechanisms of promotion, no answer talked about mechanisms specific to the humanities, only those related to the development of the sciences in general.

The National Systems of Researchers in each country include the humanities as a knowledge area. For example, in Uruguay in 2018 the researchers in the humanities represented 9.3 percent of the total and social sciences researchers

<sup>2</sup> Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica, Becas para Estudios de Postgrado en Chile y en el Extranjero, Programa Formación de Capital Humano Avanzado, “Magíster Becas Chile 2018 abre convocatoria en áreas de interés prioritario” [National Commission on Scientific and Technological Research, Scholarships for Graduate Studies in Chile and Abroad, Program for the Formation of Advanced Human Capital, Applications open for 2018 master’s scholarships in priority areas of interest], March 28, 2018, <https://www.conicyt.cl/becasconicyt/2018/03/28/magister-becas-chile-2018-abre-convocatoria-en-areas-de-interes-prioritario/>; “Beca de Magíster en el Extranjero Becas Chile en Áreas Prioritarias, Convocatoria 2019” [2019 call for master’s degree study abroad scholarships in priority areas], <https://www.conicyt.cl/becasconicyt/2019/01/03/beca-de-magister-en-el-extranjero-becas-chile-en-areas-prioritarias-convocatoria-2019/>.



made up 21.3 percent out of the total of 1,825 researchers.<sup>3</sup> In Argentina, according to statistics provided by the National Council on Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) in 2019, researchers in social sciences and the humanities represented 22.38 percent of a total of 10,917 researchers.<sup>4</sup> In Chile, National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development (FONDECYT) distributed funds from a call for proposals as follows: 40.3 percent for exact and natural science projects, 35 percent for technology projects, and 24.7 percent for projects in the social sciences and the humanities.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding financing with nonpublic funds, the survey answers were in agreement that it is almost nonexistent; this is also the case for funding from international organizations.

The survey responses noted that public policy and private investment consider the humanities and social sciences less relevant, because they are perceived as lacking academic rigor and social “utility.” According to Juan Carlos Tedesco, former director of the UNESCO Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, this division and dichotomy are harmful for thinking systematically about our complex realities, which would mean integrating ethical dimensions with social, scientific, and technological knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

## Preliminary Conclusions

The situation of the humanities in the AUGM’s sphere of influence shows a great disciplinary diversity in different countries, as well as connections with the disciplines outside the humanities, forming part of real and desirable interdisciplinarity.

There is no evidence of public policies that strongly promote the development of the humanities, and in some countries they are even negatively valued.

Funding for research in the humanities comes almost exclusively from the

<sup>3</sup> Agencia Nacional de Investigación e Innovación, Unidad de Evaluación y Monitoreo, *Sistema Nacional de Investigadores* [National Agency for Research and Innovation, Evaluation and Monitoring Unit, National System of Researchers] (2018), <https://www.anii.org.uy/upcms/files/listado-documentos/documentos/informe-de-monitoreo-sistema-nacional-de-investigadores-2008-2018.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> CONICET, “Indicadores Destacados” [Featured indicators], <https://cifras.conicet.gov.ar/publica/>.

<sup>5</sup> CONICET, “Concurso FONDECYT regular 2019 proyectos y recursos totales por disciplina” [2019 regular competition projects and total resources by discipline], <https://www.conicyt.cl/fondecyt/files/2018/07/Proyectos-y-recursos-totales-asignados-por-Disciplina.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Noticias UNSAM, “Juan Carlos Tedesco por la unión de las ciencias ‘duras’ y ‘blandas’” [Juan Carlos Tedesco for the union of “hard” and “soft” sciences], April 15, 2013, <http://noticias.unsam.edu.ar/2013/04/15/juan-carlos-tedesco-por-la-union-de-las-ciencias-duras-y-blandas/>.

public sector, although it is extremely low compared to funding for other topics of research; and funding from the private sector and international organizations is practically nonexistent.

We have identified the ten most pressing research areas that need to be developed over the next five years. UNESCO should prioritize these areas in terms of project funding.

We see the need to create a humanities network at the regional level throughout South America.

### Nota Bene

The work on this report coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization in March 2020,<sup>7</sup> whose educational, health, and social consequences motivated responses in the university sector in several disciplines.

The fields of health, biology, and technology offered important contributions to the pandemic response; however, the contributions of the humanities and social sciences were not made sufficiently clear in crucial areas such as social consequences, social isolation, poverty, marginality, migrant populations, social behaviors, gender, and education, among others. These are areas in which the humanities and social sciences individually or as part of complex disciplinary networks have had a significant response and participation.

It is necessary to make special mention of a distinctive characteristic of the Latin American university with which the AUGM identifies—university outreach and extension. From an indivisible triad of mutual enrichment, in which teaching (education), research, and outreach converge, arise disciplinary frameworks and the work of the university in its community, contributing to the development of public policies.

The dialogue between society and the university is a major component of university outreach, as are local practices. Both are significant to the construction of the field of the humanities, since it supposes a marked commitment to the problems of the country and the region, social development, and the defense of the principles of justice, human rights, and democracy.

The Declaration of the AUGM's III Congress of University Extension, "Democracy, human rights, and social inclusion: On the road to 100 years of

<sup>7</sup> "Alocución de apertura del Director General de la OMS en la rueda de prensa sobre la COVID-19 celebrada el 11 de marzo de 2020" [WHO Director General's opening remarks at the press conference on COVID-19 held on March 11, 2020], World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/es/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>.

university reform,” establishes:

From an ethical point of view, the recognition of differences, with respect to the trajectories of social actors and the need to contribute to the construction of a diverse, equitable, intercultural, and democratic society are the sustaining principles of any policy or action of extension/outreach.

It also notes that within the university

outreach should obey, without any doubt, a work plan that involves the development of the students and teachers of the university themselves, by way of teaching and learning as well as the elaboration of research agendas that prioritize other modes of creating social knowledge in accordance with and pertinent to general interest.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, in the context of this document, the importance of the III Regional Conference on Higher Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES 2018)<sup>9</sup> stands out, because its Closing Declaration contains the following express acknowledgement of the humanities:

The declaration of the principle on higher education sets itself within the UNESCO legal framework and regulations. It is inscribed within a humanist conceptual structure, with focus on human development and as an element for social mobility, able of transforming people’s lives and their realities. A politically active consideration and commitment to promote access, equity, inclusion, quality, learning and relevance is highlighted. The commitments, demands and challenges we have to face are many and they respond to the solid intention of consolidating our systems and institutions.<sup>10</sup>

*Translated from the Spanish by Kelly Camille Moore*

<sup>8</sup> “Democracia, derechos humanos e inclusión social: Camino a los 100 años de la Reforma Universitaria” [Democracy, human rights, and social inclusion: On the road to 100 years of university reform], Declaración del III Congreso de Extensión de AUGM, Santa Fe, Argentina, September 7–9, 2017, 3, <http://grupomontevideo.org/sitio/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Declaraci%C3%B3n-III-Congreso-de-Extensi%C3%B3n-de-AUGM.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Córdoba, Argentina, June 11–18, 2018, <http://cres2018.unc.edu.ar/>.

<sup>10</sup> “CRES 2018 Declaration,” III Regional Conference on Higher Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, 52, <http://cres2018.unc.edu.ar/uploads/Declaration2018Eng.pdf>.

## Montevideo Group University Association (AUGM) Participating Institutions

### Argentina

National University of Córdoba  
National University of Cuyo  
National University of Entre Ríos  
National University of the Litoral  
National University of the Northeast of the Province of Buenos Aires  
National University of Quilmes  
National University of San Luís  
National University of the South  
National University of Tucumán

### Bolivia

Higher University of San Andrés  
Royal and Pontifical Higher University of San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca

### Brazil

Federal University of Goiás  
Federal University of Santa Maria  
Federal University of São Paulo  
University of Brasília  
Paulista State University

### Chile

University of Chile  
University of Playa Ancha  
University of Santiago de Chile

### Paraguay

National University of Itapúa

### Uruguay

University of the Republic

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