

Five Months of Change

Jorge Carpizo began his rectorship with a declaration of his commitment to university reform. At his inauguration, he stated that problems left unsolved for years were causing the University to slide from excellence to mediocrity and from mediocrity towards academic disaster. Thus he took up the concern already existing in university circles over the institution's low academic standards, and expressed his determination to tackle these problems and solve them. The new rector emphasized that this task should involve the university community as a whole and he invited everyone to participate.

Accordingly, Dr. Carpizo included in his 1986 work program the performance of a truthful diagnostic study of the state of the university. This study was submitted to the University Council on April 16 last year, in a document entitled "UNAM Strengths and Weaknesses". In this unprecedented self-critical exercise, the UNAM recognized shortcomings in many different areas.

Among the problems listed in the Rector's study were the low academic standards of first-year students, both at senior high school and university level; UNAM alumni's poor professional performance; failure of teachers to fulfill obligations; lack of proper assessment of professors, classroom and research performance; irregularities in academic staff hiring practices; backwardness in the application of modern educational techniques; tenured staff's low salaries; separation between teaching and research; and poor organization in University administration.

The presentation of "UNAM Strengths and

Weaknesses" concluded with an invitation to the community to express its points of view and suggest solutions. The result was a process of open consultation throughout the University. Forums and seminars were organized; surveys were made; proposals were put forward by collegiate bodies, other organized groups, and individuals.

Out of this process came 1,760 position papers. At the end of the consultation period, the Rector's Office drew up a first list of university reform measures, largely based on these analyses and proposals. This list of measures was submitted to the Planning Council, and then placed before the full assembly of the University Council at its session celebrated on September 11 and 12, 1986.

At this session, the Council accepted the measures proposed by the Rector's Office. It repealed the Regulation for the election of staff and student representatives to school Technical Councils, and introduced substantial modifications into the General University Statute, the Academic Staff Statute, the University Council's own regulations, the Internal Regulations of the University Finance Board, and the General Regulations governing exams, enrollment, fees, and graduate studies.

Other equally important measures were announced in the same session, however. The Council decided for the preparation of self-teaching and self-assessment materials, study skills courses, and basic reading lists in every subject, to be handed out to students at the beginning of each course. Adequate supplies

Chronology of the Student Movement 1986-87

April 16: Rector Jorge Carpizo presents University Council with a document entitled —UNAM Strengths and Weaknesses—, an analysis of the University's academic problems. University reform process begins with a period of open consultation.
April-September: 1760 papers on university issues produced by members of the UNAM community, working



CEU rally outside Administration Building.

Photo from unomásano archive.

of books were to be guaranteed for University libraries and vocational guidance services bolstered. Intensive updating and educational method courses for University teachers were included in the measures, as was a massive anthology publication program. Course sequence, and where necessary programs and curricula, would be revised and updated.

"Ghost" faculty members, who collect salaries though they do no work, would be struck off the payroll. Professors would be obliged to work their stipulated hours. Technical Councils would assess academics' work reports and programs thoroughly; researchers would take on their corresponding teaching load; UNAM research policies would be defined; broader communication would be sought with society's productive sector.

Some weeks after the approval of these measures, a sector of the University community rose up in protest against the modifications made to the regulations governing enrollment, exams, and fees. Thus the University Student Council (CEU) was formed. The CEU quickly gained strength, and made its presence felt through demonstrations and marches.

Carpizo's commitment to dialog has been consistently present since the beginning of his rectorship. His first response to the student mobilization was to seek conciliation. The Rector's Office opened talks with the CEU, offering to make the regulation measures more flexible. Discussions between CEU and Rector's Office representatives were even broadcast over the University radio station, Radio UNAM.

The CEU, however, maintained its initial demand for annulment of the modifications, and even adopted new demands, such as the annulment of the modifications to the regulation governing graduate studies, and the holding of a University Congress with decision-making

powers. While openminded and flexible, the Rector has always respected and defended the UNAM's legal framework. The Congress demand, as originally proposed, was at odds with the University's established legal order and the authority held by the University Council. Nevertheless, the Rector's Office never wanted the strike, took several steps to avoid it, and deplored the CEU's attitude to it, as an ideal means to achieve its ends.

On February 10 this year, the University Council met in exceptional circumstances and premises different from its usual ones, due to the occupation of the University by the CEU. Rector Carpizo, in his characteristic spirit of conciliation, proposed the holding of a University Congress with the pluralist and democratic participation of all sectors of UNAM community. The University Council would commit itself to adopt the resolutions emanating from this Congress. The Council accepted this proposal, and also passed a motion setting up and Organization Committee for the Congress composed of representatives of the University Council, students, academic staff, the University workers' union STUNAM and the Rector's Office.

As well, the Council suspended the implementation of the controversial September regulation modifications. These measures would now be referred to the University Congress. In suspending these measures, it should be noted, the Council was in no way denying their potential beneficialness. However, it recognized that they had been rendered inviable by the strength of student opposition to them. Their suspension would, moreover, clear the way for a resumption of normal activities in the UNAM.

In a communique published on February 16, the CEU announced its decision to end the strike. As conditions, the CEU demanded several concessions, including the annulment of

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both individually and collectively, and published in the University Gazette. The papers are of many different kinds: analyses, proposals, arguments, etc.

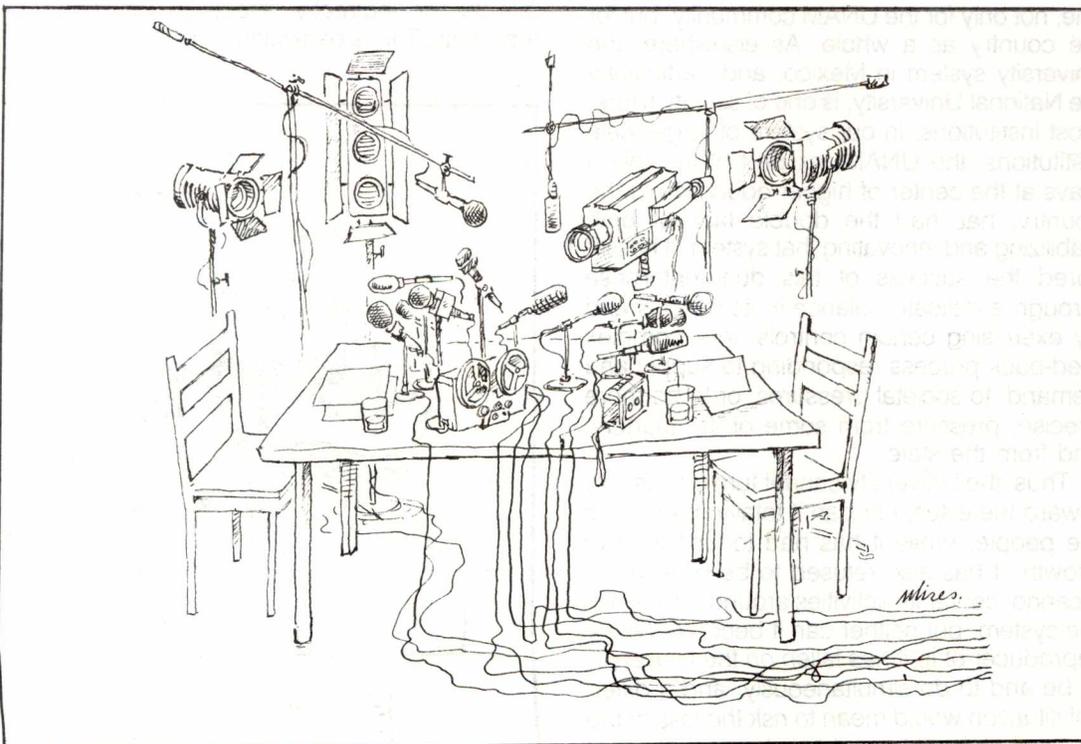
September 2: End of the consultation period. Start of vacations.

September 5: Draft reform proposal, drawn up with results of consultation, is submitted by Rector's Office to the different University Council sub-committees.

September 9: Same document is submitted to all Council members.

September 11 y 12: University Council session to consider draft. Council adopts Rector's proposed Reform Project, modifying the General University Statute and the General Regulations governing exams, enrollment, fees and graduate studies.

Twelve student council members challenge the legality of the session and of



off-campus classes given during the strike; the acceptance by authorities of responsibility for material "removed" from campus on the eve of the strike; and allocation to the CEU of on-campus office space, cafeterias, and infrastructure. The students also demanded the dropping of charges laid against strikers, and no further charges or reprisals.

The Rector's Office counterproposal offered to lengthen the school year, take no reprisals against CEU members or sympathizers, and lay no responsibility on students for materials and utensils removed by Department heads at the strike's start. The CEU accepted the Rector's Office proposal and ended the strike.

Dr. Carpizo's rectorship has thus introduced new practices into University administration. Consistently rejecting authoritarianism, intolerance and arbitrary behavior, he has made dis-

cussion, conciliation and interchange of ideas the University's instruments for solving controversies. He has, moreover, stimulated change and initiated the transformation of the University. In short, Carpizo has proved an exception among UNAM rectors for democratic attitudes and practices. With him at the helm, and with the dynamism demonstrated by the University community as a whole, the UNAM offers a promising prospect for the future. The intelligence, maturity, and will to change shown by the University allow us to entertain high hopes of it.★

Mario Ruiz Massieu
UNAM Assistant General Secretary

(The Spanish original of this article was published in the magazine **Universidad de México**)

Towards a University of the Future

Visualizing the University's future is difficult, when for decades the institution has neither been analyzed or discussed, and its development has been strongly shaped by improvisation, leading to its current, problem-laden situation. Outlining a project for the University is further complicated by the times, when our project as a nation, beyond the ups and downs of electoral politics, is threatened and daily suffers disfiguring setbacks.

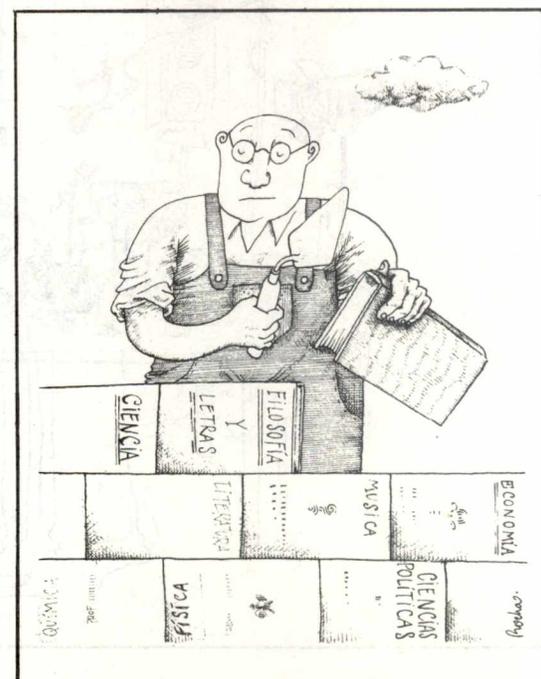
It's a difficult task, for sure, but an important one, not only for the UNAM community, but for the country as a whole. As elsewhere, the university system in Mexico, and particularly the National University, is one of society's foremost institutions, the UNAM, as part of the role it plays at the center of higher education in the country, has had the double task of both stabilizing and innovating that system. It has insured the success of this dual enterprise through a delicate balance in its policies and by exercising certain controls, in a complex feed-back process responding to supply and demand, to societal pressures, or to be more precise, pressure from some of its quarters, and from the state.

Thus, the University cannot turn exclusively toward the elites, nor can it totally open up to the people. While it has had to limit its own growth, it has also refused to be broken up; it cannot center its activities around criticism of the system, but neither can it become a mere reproducer of it. It has fallen on the University to be and to do simultaneously, and a different situation would mean to risk the loss of the National University as it has been until now.

We should say that for the time being, and

dictionaries aside since they don't register this curious habit of ours, we will continue to speak of "University" when we really mean the UNAM. We know it's not the only university, but nonetheless the destiny of our whole system of higher learning is inter-twined with the UNAM, if only because of its gargantuan size.

It's only natural that this multiplicity of facets and functions should cause tension and upsets within the University, tension that explodes at the first attempt to implement any kind of change directly or indirectly affecting any one of the facets. This is particularly so if the proposed



the draft reform proposal.
September 24: Student council members hold a meeting in the School of Philosophy and Letters. Some 500 students come out against the amendments.
October 20-25: Classes resume. Student meetings held on different UNAM campuses to analyze the amendments.
October 25-30: In Prepas and Sciences and Humanities High Schools (CCHs), students organize for a General Student Assembly called for Oct. 31. On October 27, a mass rally is held on esplanade outside Administration Building. Students demand repeal of amendments to the regulations governing enrollment, exams, and fees. No objection is raised to the other resolutions taken by the University Council.
October 31: Formation of the University Student Council