

# The National University of Mexico

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**F**orged by 450 years of history and 62 years as an autonomous institution, the National University of Mexico (UNAM) is the country's largest and oldest university. It is also the most productive and influential research center in Mexico, playing the most active role in dissemination of culture.

The UNAM provides education for students from all strata of Mexican society, preparing them to be technicians and professionals useful to their fellow countrymen. It studies Mexico's conditions and problems, applying its scientific, humanist and social knowledge to their solution. The UNAM thus reaps, preserves, increases and transmits universal knowledge and Mexico's national cultural values.

Originally scattered around the Historic Center of Mexico City, the UNAM eventually moved to the current campus of the University City, now being decentralized into multi-disciplinary campuses. One of the largest universities in

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*One of the most populous universities in the world, the National University of Mexico plays a key role in the professional and technical education of the nation's human resources. The huge range of academic services it provides have required a thoroughly modern infrastructure and a well-structured and autonomous administration.*



The National University Rectory Tower.

José Luis Herrera.

the world, the UNAM now has computers and modern telecommunications with which to lay the foundation for its future as a modern university linked to the universities of Mexico and the world.

One striking feature of the university's modernization is its integrated telecommunications network. One of the largest in the world, this network transmits voice, data and video simultaneously. Its infrastructure includes nine satellite stations, seven shortwave stations and 80 kilometers of fiber optics linking the university community, and establishing electronic mail links with Mexican and overseas universities at an average 500 messages per day.

The UNAM also has state custody of the Mexican National Library, the Mexican National Serials Library and the National Astronomical Observatory, to name a few. The UNAM has 164 libraries and the richest bibliographic collection available for higher education and research in the

\* Secretary for Academic Services of the UNAM.





Students on campus at the UNAM.

country, with more than four and a half million works catalogued; three and a half million volumes, and one million three hundred thousand documentary records.

UNAM's close links with the public and productive sectors of Mexico is another of the institution's important features. In 1990, the UNAM signed more than 160 development and technology transfer contracts with both public and private entities. This university-industry association includes both the transfer of scientific projects and technological innovations, on-the-job training and exchange of experience.

The University campus is situated on 1,700,000 square meters of land, 68% of which is devoted to teaching, 16% to research, 9% to cultural dissemination, and the remainder to support systems and others. There are a total of 978 buildings on 244 sites, 21 of which are scattered around the country, 82 in metropolitan Mexico City and 141 within the University City campus. The UNAM is organized around four areas: teaching, research, cultural dissemination, and central administration.

### Teaching

Upper secondary schooling falls within the purview of the National Preparatory School and the baccalaureate system of the College of Sciences and Humanities (CCH) scattered over 14 different sites around Mexico City. Undergraduate and graduate studies are offered by 13 faculties, 4 schools, 5 multidisciplinary units, and the academic units included in the Professional and Post-graduate Cycle of the CCH. Nine study plans are offered for 7 technical specialties and 110 curricula for 64 degree programs.

Post-graduate course options total 306 under 124 specialized courses, 134 at the masters level and 48 at the doctoral level. Since 1972, the UNAM also operates an Open University System in 9 faculties and schools that teach 16 degree-level programs, one technical, and three specialist.

The 434 degree programs and curricula are taught by a staff of 33,255; 4,000 of whom are tenured professors, 23,000 lecturers, 5,000 teaching assistants and the rest academic technicians.

More than 270,000 students were enrolled for the 1990-91 academic year. Out of every 1,000 students, 449 were upper secondary school baccalaureate candidates, 485 were undergraduate degree candidates, 43 were graduate students, 15 pursued technical studies and 8, university and musical initiation.

The University provides continuing education through its 19 schools and faculties, offering over 1,500 courses every year, with an attendance of approximately 33,000, and the participation of 8,000 university staff as lecturers.

The UNAM is empowered to extend its study plans and curricula to other institutions by incorporating them into its system, thereby providing official validation to studies pursued in both domestic and foreign educational systems. The system extends to 359 institutions offering lower secondary, technical, higher secondary and higher education, with a total population of 143,000 students and a teaching staff of 14,000.

### Research

Research is divided between humanities and the sciences, and carried out in 25 institutes, 13 centers and five university programs: covering Interdisciplinary, Food, Energy, Clinical and Environmental Improvement Research.

The UNAM supports the decentralization of research in Mexico through a nationwide network of research centers in the sciences and humanities: the Institute of Biotechnology with its 7 research centers, 19 National Seismological Service stations, 17 National Oceanographic Network stations, 5 observatories, 4 research institute laboratories, 7 research stations, one research unit, 16 telemetric detection and seismic survey stations, 2 experimental farms, one accelerograph network in Mexico's seismic zone, and two oceanographic research ships.

There are also 2,790 academics indirectly involved in research in the humanities and sciences through research and training centers under UNAM's co-sponsorship with CONACYT, the Federal government, and thirteen states.

During 1990, approximately 700 lines of research were pursued, of which 600 were science-related, and 100 in the





humanities. Similarly, approximately 3,000 research projects were carried out of which approximately 46% were devoted to the sciences and 54% to the humanities. These projects generated close to 2,000 published books and periodicals, and more than 2,000 specialized reports.

The quality of this work is reflected in the number of national prizes and distinctions awarded to UNAM teaching staff, such as the National Science Prize, the Scientific Research Academy's Prize, the Elias Sourasky Prize and others. One third of the researchers in the National System of Researchers are members of the UNAM's academic staff, as are 50% of the members of the Scientific Consultative Council and the National College.

### Cultural Dissemination

This program is coordinated through 6 centers and dependencies devoted to the promotion of the arts and the dissemination of culture in various forms. The program's infrastructure consists of a total of 225 spaces in and outside the University City, for lectures, films and music, 15 periodical libraries, 79 auditoriums, 29 libraries, 43 large lecture halls, 14 audio libraries and 14 museums. South of the University City lies the University Cultural Center, the Miguel Covarrubias Hall, and the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Theater.

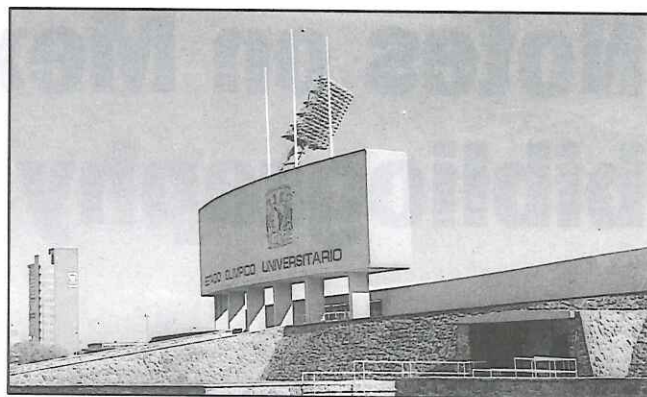
Dissemination and extension activities are performed by an administrative and academic staff of about 2,000. On average, each year, the program provides more than 10,000 services, publishes more than 50 books, 12 magazines, bulletins and booklets as well as editing records, and cassettes with a circulation of around 200,000. In addition, it produces 25 short, medium and full-length films, 50 dance and theatrical performances, 53 television spots and programs, and 3,500 radio and video programs.

### The Central Administration

This is composed of 26 working dependencies, grouped around the General Secretariat, the Secretariat for Academic Services, the Auxiliary Secretariat, the General Legal Counsel's Office, and the General Information Office, which are all directly responsible to the Rector.

Over 25,000 people are employed by the Central Administration,

*A sculptural homage to the ancient lava bed on the UNAM campus.*



*The UNAM Olympic Stadium.*

José Luis Herrera.

of which 87% are administrative staff, and 13% are executive staff.

The university budget for 1991 was over \$650,000,000,000 pesos, of which 10% was income generated by the university itself, 66% was assigned to teaching, 24% to research, 6% to cultural dissemination, and the remainder to support services.

### University Government

Self-government was achieved with the grant of autonomy in 1929, included in the university's constitution in 1933 and made specific in 1944 when the Caso Act defined the boundary between academic and political affairs. Student participation in the organs of authority has insured the University's constant self-improvement. The constitution establishes the university's governing organs as composed of the University Council, the Rector, the Board of Governors, the *Patronato*, the Directors of Schools, Faculties and Institutes, and the Technical Councils. These authorities are either collegiate or individual. To carry out their functions, both must seek the help of collegiate bodies such as inner councils, advisory councils, academic committees, post-graduate study councils among others. Both collegiate and individual university authorities are bound by a legal ruling establishing their interdependence and preventing the predominance of any one over the rest.

Collegiate bodies are composed of representatives of students, teaching staff, workers and individual authorities. Thus the university community is involved in appointing members to the University Council, which in turn appoints the members of the Board of Governors who designate individual authorities, who are always academics.

There are currently 296 collegiate bodies in the UNAM, consisting of approximately 3,000 members of the university. Area Academic Councils are now being created to serve as intermediate organs between the 22 School and Faculty Technical Councils and the University Council ❖