



Distinguished Rector,

Distinguished Guests,

Esteemed Members of the Academic Community,

Dear Colleagues,

"I have always strongly believed in the transformative power of higher education and the fundamental role that our educational institutions play in building a more just, equitable, and prosperous society"— it was with this message that the personality to whom SNSPA awards today the title of Doctor Honoris Causa received the Carlos Martínez Durán Award from the Latin American Union of Universities, in April this year.

Professor Hugo Oscar Juri, a tireless advocate for free public education, was the rector of the National University of Córdoba, the second oldest university in the Americas, with a continuous tradition spanning 400 years. Remarkably, he is the only rector in the university's history to have been elected for three terms (1998-2012, 2016-2019, 2019-2022). Currently, he serves as the rector of the University of Meaning, the first university established by the State of Vatican.

However, as the introduction suggests, Hugo Oscar Juri is more than just his titles: he is a personality who not only believes in but actively works towards making higher education a real contributor to social transformation. In his view, the role of the university should not be limited to educating students but must involve active engagement in solving society's real problems by contributing to the common good.

"Everyone" – wrote Viktor Frankl – "has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment" because, he continued "therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated". Hugo Juri is an irreplaceable scholar who excels in his mission, and I wish to emphasize that it is no small matter to have him here with us today.

Professor Juri graduated in medicine from the National University of Córdoba (Argentina) and obtained his PhD from the same institution, where he was awarded the prize for the best thesis of the year in surgery. He is a specialist in surgery at the



National University of Córdoba, specializing in head and neck surgery at the State University of New York and Harvard University. He is also a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Humanistic Studies in Las Vegas and was a Postgraduate Lecturer in Masters at the Sorbonne University.

Hugo Juri is a full professor at the National University of Córdoba, and in addition to his position as rector, he has held various other academic roles. He has taught at Pomona University in California and at the State University of New York. Between 1994-1995, he was the Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the National University of Córdoba, and between 1995-1998, he served as vice-rector of the same institution.

Professor Juri is the author of more than 100 scientific papers in the field of laser surgery and a member of the editorial committees of numerous academic journals. He is also the founder of the Córdoba Laser Center, an important research and training center for specialists from across Latin America. His research has been recognized with various awards, including the prize for the best paper awarded by the American Academy of Orthopedic and Neurological Surgery at the 10th Congress in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 1986, and the "De Robertis" Prize for the best paper awarded by the Rio de la Plata Anatomy Society in 1992. In his medical career, it is worth noting that Hugo Juri served as head of the surgery department at Beverly Hills Hospital in California.

It goes without saying that he is a national and international leader in his field, as evidenced by the recognition of his work. He has been mentioned in Maruqis' "Who is Who", which contains biographies of notable individuals (1985 - "Who's Who in Optical Science and Engineering" and 1987 - "Who's Who in the World"). He has been a special guest and speaker at numerous prestigious international conferences, including the Inaugural Conference of the German Laser Association Congress (1992) and the Soviet Union International Laser Congress, organized by the Soviet Union National Laser Research Center for Surgery in Córdoba (1988). He has also presided over such events, including the World Laser Congress held in Buenos Aires in 1995, declared an event of national interest by Argentina's Ministry of Science and Technology. Additionally, he has served as honorary member of the National Laser Commission of the Republic of Cuba (1996), honorary president of the Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine at the 16th World Congress in Chennai, India (2004), and



president of the International Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery in Bangkok, Thailand.

Beyond academia and medicine, Prof. Dr. Juri has made contributions to the public and governmental sphere, holding high-responsibility roles, including Minister of Education in the early 2000s. He was Director of the Córdoba Province Scientific and Technological Research Council (1993-1997), President of the National Commission for Higher Education Improvement within Argentina's Ministry of Education (2001), twice President of the National Interuniversity Council (1999 and 2018-2019), member of the Executive Committee of the Córdoba Strategic Planning Council (2009-2012), President of the Argentine National Academy of Education (2012), and member of the Presidential Council "Argentina 2030" (2016-2017).

In addition to his positions in national institutions, Professor Hugo Juri has built an impressive international profile, being an honorary guest of the Director-General of UNESCO at the World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris (1998), Permanent Secretary of the National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (2001-2003), member of the Drafting Committee for the Declaration issued by the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (2008), President of UNESCO's Regional Higher Education Conference (2018), Vice-President of the Ibero-American Association of Postgraduate Studies (2019-2020), President of the Euro-Latin American University Association Columbus (2019-2020), Vice-President and Honorary Advisor of the Latin American Union of Universities (since 2016), and a member of the Fulbright Argentina Board for over a decade.

Moreover, as the head of the Argentine delegation, Dr. Hugo Oscar Juri played a key role in the presentation and approval of the candidacy of the National University of Córdoba under the Rectorate's leadership as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000. Thanks to his vision and dedication, an emblematic institution for Latin American education, with centuries of history, has gained global recognition. This achievement highlights not only the cultural and academic richness of the National University of Córdoba but also Professor Hugo Juri's tireless efforts to protect and promote Argentina's intellectual and cultural heritage.



Dr. Hugo Juri's impressive career is marked by a deep passion for education, particularly higher education. As I mentioned in the introduction, for Professor Juri, education must have a transformative component, and throughout his career, he has made this a mission, being involved in countless initiatives regarding the internationalization and democratization of higher education.

Professor Hugo Juri was among the founders of the Latin American Virtual University, an initiative launched in Cáceres, Spain, conceived as a space for intellectual, scientific, and cultural cooperation, primarily supported by information technology. Perhaps today, especially after the experience of online education during the pandemic, a virtual university seems a natural endeavor, but this proposal—for a Latin American Virtual University—was launched in 1999 (25 years ago), which can only be described as the work of visionaries.

However, his dedication to internationalization is not limited to this proposal. In 2018, Professor Hugo Juri chaired the 3rd Latin America and Caribbean-European Union Academic Summit of the Permanent Academic Forum Latin America and the Caribbean-European Union. Organized as part of the centennial celebration of the University Reform of 1918, the event was a key moment in shaping the future of collaboration between the two regions, marked by the adoption of the Córdoba Commitment, which laid the foundations for the Permanent Academic Forum Latin America and the Caribbean-European Union to work towards recognizing training and diplomas between universities in both regions.

In this context, as in many others, Hugo Juri spoke about the need for universities to adapt to social realities. "We must," argued Professor Juri, "rethink the university and not be dogmatic. This is not the best way—it is the only way." His role in reforming higher education has been essential, and his numerous publications and conferences held on all continents have significantly impacted the global debate on education. This explains why Professor Hugo Juri—and not someone else—was appointed in 2020 as the rector of the University of Meaning, an initiative of Pope Francis in response to the global crisis of meaning, which aims to provide accessible and flexible education tailored to society's current needs.



Considering the lasting impact of Professor Hugo Juri in the fields of education, research, and the reform of higher education, it is not surprising that he has received the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from other universities as well, including the University of Extremadura (Spain), the National University of La Rioja (Argentina), and the National University of Litoral (Argentina). Moreover, he was personally knighted by the King of Spain as Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Isabel the Catholic.

Through his efforts to transform education and respond to global challenges, Professor Juri has demonstrated that universities can be engines of social change and innovation. With a remarkable career that includes prestigious academic and administrative roles, he has profoundly influenced the global educational landscape. Like his vision of education as a transformative force, his work remains a beacon of inspiration for future educational leaders and for all those engaged in the noble mission of building a more equitable and prosperous society. Today, SNSPA has the honor of recognizing his exceptional contributions by awarding him the title of Doctor Honoris Causa, thus highlighting his lasting impact on education worldwide.