

Inauguration of the 10th International Conference on University Teaching & Innovation CIDUI 2018

*«Learning Spaces: Agents for Change at
Universities»*

Palau de Congressos, Girona

President,
Dr Gros,
Dr Baños,
faculty,

When I was drafting my speech for today, I wanted to look back on what was said at a previous holding of this International Conference on University Teaching and Innovation.

The 2017 conference focused on teachers, whereas this year will be looking at learning spaces. Despite this change of focus, there's clearly a constant theme: all the pieces are important if the educational gears are to turn;

but what is most vital is that they are aligned, as we work together to build an educational model that responds to the needs of society, to the needs of students, fulfilling the potential of each and every one of the parts that make the whole.

Relatively speaking, the educational model is like the antique astrolabe, the navigational tool (said to have been invented by Hypatia of Alexandria and perfected by the Arabs) that let us master the seas and saw ships travel the oceans.

As was the case with astrolabes (or later with octants, quadrants and sextants) educational models also require constant adjustment.

Because if the sun and the stars change their position as the ship moves through different latitudes, then the same happens with society, students and those involved in education and training. As the recently passed Stephen Hawking said: "Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change."

Hugging the coast may seem to be the safest way to sail, but in truth, sailing out to sea is much smarter and, if I may say so, more interesting.

And let's be honest, who doesn't like to feel smarter and more interesting?



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When it comes to our universities, for example, new technologies – the internet in particular – have opened a window of opportunity for new learning spaces.

Whether to support traditional classrooms, as the main setting for learning, or as laboratories, libraries, workshops or online forums, they increase our ability to respond to the demands for greater academic flexibility, to the needs for continuing education, and to the limitations of the classic models.

Because, without wanting to be condescending about the past and tradition, if we want to remain true to what we have achieved, we need to expand our outlook and get away from what we already know.

We need to look beyond the official programmes we currently offer.

Because, again without wishing to be condescending, the certificate and who signs it isn't important, what's important is that the education we provide is useful to our students.



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creativity have to form part of everything we do.»

In other words, our survival as centres for higher education and research is not based on tradition, but on our ability to set ourselves apart through quality, adaptability and creativity.

Quality, adaptability and creativity have to form part of everything we do.

And this includes both the physical and online spaces.

Reform after reform, improvement upon improvement, we have to aim for excellence – as we always have – introducing new tools, increasing accessibility, accelerating processes, responding to new demands, overcoming difficulties, providing new opportunities, taking on new challenges...

Our classrooms, labs, workshops and libraries – whether brick-and-mortar or online – and our teachers, materials, competencies and everything else to be found on our campuses are the modern version of the astrolabe.

But let's not fool ourselves, without the hands that know how to use it, without a mind able to understand it, and with no idea of where we want to go, the astrolabe of the past, the GPS of the present and the ASPN (All Source Positioning and Navigation) of the future are pointless.

We need all the hands, brains and ideas present here today to look to find the best path for the future on this sea of teaching and innovation.

Above all, we mustn't forget, we need to be smart and interesting: let's ally our efforts with evolution through quality, adaptability and creativity.

Thank you very much!