

## Challenges of managing a public university

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The difficulties faced in a university career make life as a professor a huge challenge, with achievements and experiences that many times lead us down very unexpected paths. In the field of dentistry there are professors with specific roles and sporadic activities in overlapping domains, such as public administration and important civil society organizations.

Building an administrative team, for research and teaching, in health or in any other segment of society, is the biggest challenge of modern leadership. The model employed to manage the School of Dentistry at the Federal University of Uberlândia (FOUFU) for eight years and a combination of political circumstances resulted in the university community electing me as president of the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), an institution of national importance. The UFU community, covering basic, technical, undergraduate and graduate education, with their administrative and supplementary bodies, today encompasses approximately 30,000 students, professors and technical and administrative staff. UFU's budget is currently the third largest in the state of Minas Gerais, generating development and income for the city of Uberlândia and the region as a whole. Since its foundation in the 1960s, UFU has continued to grow, and, on its three original *campuses*, space is no longer available for new buildings. Dedicated and proud of the institution, the university community, through its activities in teaching, research and university extension, continues to call for further growth and improved infrastructure, in an ongoing effort to provide the means necessary to carry out their tasks and achieve their objectives, which ultimately serve the needs of society. In this context, providing continuity to this rich history of challenges, the current administration of UFU has redoubled its efforts to build new classrooms, laboratories, administrative areas, student dorms, meeting places and sports areas, the university restaurant on the Umarama *campus* and more parking space, in addition to countless other renovation projects of all types. Additions of over 90,000 m<sup>2</sup> are under construction, on top of the 227,000 m<sup>2</sup> already erected as of 2008. This means that the facilities built over the entire history of UFU were enlarged by 50% in just two years of work, not counting the start of construction, planned for this year, on the *campuses* in Monte Carmelo, MG, and Patos de Minas, MG. And buildings are just a part of the improvements: Upgrades and updates have been made to undergraduate laboratories, graduate program activities, IT resources, furniture for existing infrastructure as well as the expansion and modernization of the administration of UFU university hospitals to enable expanded care, not to mention support for activities in culture and art and improvements

in the financial health of university support foundations. All of these actions are clearly felt in daily life at the university. Hard work, institutional involvement and the competence of the teams responsible for these projects are the attributes that enable these achievements.

The exponential growth of research in both quantity and quality are reflected by the constant improvements in the publication rates in journals with high impact factors in the various branches of knowledge. In graduate studies, we have prioritized the consolidation of existing programs, with institutional investments and strategic planning carried out together with improvements aimed at supporting structural and administrative development. This has enabled UFU to improve the standing of various programs in the last triennial assessment carried out by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), without any program being downgraded. New doctoral programs, such as the one in dentistry, were recently approved by the Technical-Scientific Committee (CTC) of CAPES, and will be offered in 2012. In healthcare, UFU plays a vital role in supporting the Unified Health System (SUS) in the region. We have the largest University Hospital in the state of Minas Gerais with

530 beds. Changes in administrative routines have resolved historic financial difficulties, and better times lie ahead with expansions and the purchase of new, modern equipment that will enable better service for everyone. We have recovered the true role of the Support Foundations, by accrediting all of our foundations with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science and Technology (MEC/MCT) and making them into a link to the outside world, enabling funds to be raised for culture, extension, education and, primarily, for research.

Construction of buildings, classrooms and new *campuses*, and expansion of programs represent not only the vision of progress of this institution, but also shows its greatest and most important vocation: creating opportunity so that young Brazilians can prepare themselves for the future, with new, more important competencies and perspectives. Every achievement is a part of the legacy that our entire team strives to build for future generations. The Federal University of Uberlândia is no longer just the University of Uberlândia, but rather a University *situated in* Uberlândia, which continues to consolidate its position as the regional university of the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba.