

**Director's Opening Remarks for the OAS-PAHO-GCUB
4th University Internationalization Seminar
Presented by PAHO's Deputy Director, Dr. Isabella Danel
Monday, 14 March 2016, 9:30-11:00 am
OAS Headquarters, 1889 F Street, NW, Washington, DC. USA**

It is an honor to sit at this head table with our partner organizations to open this seminar on *"Universities as Agents of Change: Innovation and Socio-Economic Growth."* I know that Dr. Etienne, the Director of PAHO, was looking forward to being here but was called to a meeting in Geneva.

I am here today to say 'thank you' for this important partnership that started two years ago in February 2014, when PAHO signed an agreement with the OAS, allowing the OAS scholarship program to expand its reach to cover the health sector. In just two years, this program has supported over 180 talented scholars from 22 countries in the Americas to pursue graduate studies focusing on health, both masters and doctoral degrees, at top-notch Universities in Brazil and Mexico.

This partnership is important to PAHO for many reasons, three of which stand out:

First –it helps to build human resources for health. Universal access to health and universal health coverage is THE top priority for the Americas. A strong, qualified health workforce is critical to attain, sustain and accelerate progress on universal health coverage. Initiatives like this partnership help

strengthen the health sector as a whole – we're increasing the numbers and improving the quality of health care workers.

Second –this partnership promotes effective, ethically-based research which makes a positive impact on health. Last year, PAHO signed an agreement with the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (GCUB) to advance our 'Policy on Research for Health.' As part of this agreement, we are providing the OAS scholars with tools to produce and use quality research, not just for the health sector but for any professional interested in producing or using research that improves people's health directly or by addressing the social determinants of health. These tools will benefit the scholars, as well as universities, as they are also made available to the professors.

Third and perhaps most important of all –this partnership encourages innovation through multi-disciplinary collaboration. Innovation is stimulated by the interface of arts and science, from the collaboration of diverse minds with different ways of understanding issues. Universities are rich and fertile grounds for interactions where varied areas of knowledge contribute to innovations for health. It is from an interest in enhancing and strengthening these interactions and capacities that our Policy on Research for Health emerged, and we invite researchers from all relevant disciplines to work towards this goal of innovative solutions to health problems. Our partnership helps create an environment for exchange and collaboration

with other sectors, which is key to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and emphasizes that health and research for health are drivers of human and economic development.

These three areas—building human resources for health, promoting effective research and supporting multi-sectorial, inter-disciplinary collaboration—are necessary to strengthen health systems and support PAHO's goal of Universal Health Coverage and Universal Access to Health, which is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goal for health.

Tomorrow, we welcome you to our PAHO headquarters. There you will hear about cutting-edge 'social innovations and research for health' from leaders across sectors. You will learn about research reporting standards that allow research consumers to seize the benefits of research, as well as help universities gain better visibility. You will also learn about how to effectively use and report research to address critical topics such as equity assessments and balancing the benefits and harms of health interventions. This workshop will be facilitated by a research professional of the EQUATOR Network, the leading initiative on research reporting in biomedicine. With support from PAHO, the EQUATOR network recently launched these research tools in Portuguese so they are now available in three languages: Spanish, English and Portuguese. Adding the Portuguese interface widens the reach of reporting guidelines and further stimulates the production and use of quality research for health across the Americas.

This morning, I am also proud to announce another valuable tool available to the PAHO-OAS and our Brazilian and Mexican partners. Today, we are launching virtual courses on “Good Research for Health Practices,” on-line courses that are offered exclusively to scholars and lecturers in this partnership. They will now have access to these courses made available through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative based at the University of Miami. They are benchmark training courses offered and used by leading research institutions within our Region and around the globe, and are available in the three languages.

Through our partnership, we are enabling the universities and our scholars to be at the leading edge of scientific production and innovation. We are grateful to our long-term partner, the OAS, and our newer partners—the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities and the Mexican CONACYT and AMEXCID—for making this possible. This program will impact academic communities of more than 180 scholars, and have a positive impact on health achieved through their research and through open networks for collaboration at the national, regional and international level.

I wish all of you a very successful seminar over the next two days, and am confident that you will contribute to the many ambitious goals and objectives we humans have set forth for ourselves to be achieved over the next fifteen years and beyond. [End]