

*Laudatio for the Laurea Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa
of Derek C. Bok from Complutense University*

The Complutense University is very pleased to award Derek Curtis Bok, of Harvard University, the degree of Doctor *honoris causa*. This is the highest honor we are able to confer.

During his career at Harvard, Derek Bok served as Dean of the Law School (1968-1971), as President (1971-1991), and again as interim President (2006-2007). He is the 300th Anniversary University Research Professor and faculty chair of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations. The author of seven books and numerous essays on higher education, Derek has also written widely on government and law.

Today, we honor Derek, not for any one specific post he has held, but for his stewardship of our institutions of higher learning.

Derek has helped steward the academy through some of the most turbulent decades in its history. And he continues to influence our institutions today. While we could name many achievements, if we enumerated them all, the list would simply be overwhelming. Today, we will focus on three areas in particular: curricular reform, teaching and learning, and internationalization spheres of education in which Derek has inspired universities to think and to function differently. These three areas are also particularly important to the Complutense University.

In recent years, higher education has come under increasing scrutiny. As higher education expands, it is often a victim of its own success. Rising costs are especially troubling for politicians and publics alike. But as Derek has said, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." As a leader in higher education, Derek's fore-sight has been essential in giving meaning to the term "stewardship", which he defined as: "the responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." His careful balance of means and ends has helped launch some of the most promising innovations in higher learning.

In 1971, Derek was a young Dean of the Law School when he was tapped to steward Harvard University. At the time, Harvard was facing a significant crisis in its history. A kind of "perfect storm" of events, including a difficult economy, political turmoil, and campus unrest challenged universities around the world. Derek's background as a labor negotiator was seen as a benefit in this environment. There was the famous story of the time when, as Dean, he brought

coffee and donuts to a group of Law School students threatening to take over a faculty meeting. He declared the meeting open and, unlike many university leaders of the time, he listened carefully to their views.

But while many in the community expected Derek to heal and mediate between fractured parties, they did not fully realize that Derek also had a vision for Harvard. In its first two hundred years, Harvard had been a regional college. In the twentieth century, it had become a national institution. Derek's vision projected Harvard towards becoming a university of the world. To do this, he argued, Harvard must open itself up to innovations from other institutions as well as create new ideas not yet fully imagined.

Derek's first priority as president was to engage the community in support of an ambitious reform aimed at changing and shaping the curriculum. In the '60s, both Yale and Princeton had launched curricular reform efforts aimed at unifying the curriculum and educating citizens. These debates were often bogged down by a long war between educational philosophies. To summarize somewhat crudely, those in the humanities tended to value the classics, literature, and history as the core of learning, while those in the sciences tended to value analysis of contemporary, real-life problems. Both tended to see their programs as embodying political or even metaphysical ideals. With little common ground between the two parties emerging, "general education" suffered from a dearth of new ideas.

One option, spearheaded by the Harvard President Charles Eliot in the years after the American Civil War, was to value student choice and motivation to specialize in a particular subject. A modification of this option had been favored by advocates of educational *laissez-faire* and by many of the student protesters. Yet, Derek did not see this option as one of responsibility for Harvard, or for education for citizenship at large.

Derek reframed the debate as less of a war, than a discussion with common principles. He appointed a new Dean of the Faculty, Henry Rosovsky, who shared his views. They began by writing a series of "open letters" and reports to the community. These essays conveyed a balanced view of the curriculum and pointed out that all three sides could likely agree on the basic principles of an educated person. As part of the open letter process, Bok and Rosovsky invited faculty and students to write their own essays and letters on education.

After collecting these writings --- which often numbered many pages in length -- Bok and Rosovsky set up seven different task forces, conducted evaluations of existing curricular experiments, and collected further assessments from faculty around the university. "Debates about teaching and curriculum change are traditionally conducted on the basis of intuition and assertion," Bok wrote in one of his early annual reports. "To some extent this is inevitable, given the intangible quality of education. But some assessments can often be made, and greater attention to this process may enlarge our capacities for discriminating

choice." With this statement and others like it, Bok tried to bring balance to debates that had often sharply divided education as an "art," with intangible benefits, from education as a "science," whose value could be measured.

Bok and Rosovsky also worked to reframe the discussion around core competencies, not around subjects of learning. The Harvard Core Curriculum, eventually adopted in 1979 after considerable faculty debate, included five major areas of competence: social analysis and moral reasoning; historical study; artistic expression; scientific literacy; and cultural understanding. In each of these areas, students would understand not only content but theory and different methodological approaches to knowledge. They would also ideally see morality and ethics as connected to all the social sciences, where values had long been banished. To these broad areas were added requirements in writing, mathematics, and foreign language.

The intention of the new Core was to upgrade undergraduate education. By becoming one of the first U.S. programs to require students to take courses in foreign cultures, and by embracing different approaches to knowledge, the curriculum was worldly in vision. Although Derek has seldom indicated from where he and Rosovsky drew inspiration, the new Core mirrored in many ways the newly launched International Baccalaureate and proposals for curricular reform by Daniel Bell at Columbia.

In 1978, as the Core was under considerable debate by the faculty, Derek likened curricular reform to "moving a cemetery." The Core underwent revisions and further debate especially among traditionalists at Harvard, but it also inspired other universities to reform their curricula. The U.S. newspapers seized on it and called it an "educational revolution." Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Amherst, Cornell, the University of North Carolina, and Middlebury, among others, all adopted similar reforms in the next few decades. Many of these models persist today. More than the model itself, the process of making the Core outlasted the model itself. Today, faculty rarely debates the curriculum in a vacuum, and almost every college and university has reframed the discussion of curricular reform around learning outcomes rather than subjects.

Less recognized behind this media attention, but perhaps even more influential, was the process of teaching and learning evaluation underlying the Core. Derek wrote to the community in his early annual reports that "what is needed is a more systematic awareness of the work in progress and an appraisal of the results achieved so that truly valuable innovations can be spread to other parts of campus where similar ventures could prove useful." While each faculty would keep its autonomy, Derek was convinced that successful institutions could only innovate by sharing their ideas in a market both competitive and collaborative.

Faculty members were given start-up funds to spark pedagogical innovations and share teaching methods. The purpose of this sharing was not to

compare apples to apples, or disciplines to disciplines, but to find areas of pedagogical convergence. With the help of the Danforth Foundation, Bok established one of the first teaching and learning centers at a major American university to achieve this aim. The center served as a clearinghouse on the latest teaching and learning methods as well as resources from cognitive science. In his second book on education, *Higher Learning* (1986), Derek advocated for a data- and purpose-driven assessment to be led by the faculty -- not by the government or private organizations. These teaching and learning centers are now commonplace at American universities and are growing in number abroad.

In 1991, the Danforth Center was renamed the Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. In 2011, Rita and Gustave Houser gave \$40 million to establish the Harvard Initiative on Learning and Teaching. Over the next ten years, the Harvard Initiative on Learning and Teaching is aiming to seed hundreds of initiatives across the university as well as conduct high-quality research on the learning process to be shared with the world. These programs, improved upon and adjusted by subsequent presidents, have their roots in Bok's vision of an open and innovative Harvard.

Just as Derek sought to reframe curricular reform and spark teaching innovation, he also had a vision for comprehensive internationalization. The 1970s and '80s were a dark time for international education in the U.S. As Derek himself noted, federal support for international programs declined significantly since the '1960s. "Foundations have likewise reduced their support for the study of foreign regions by more than 50%...as a result, the great research centers throughout the country are atrophying."

During these difficult times for internationalization, Derek went further and he chided American universities and the government for not internationalizing quickly or strategically enough. He envisioned a time when Harvard would enroll over one-third international students, have research centers and partnerships located throughout the world, require all students to work abroad and study foreign languages and cultures, and maintain robust programs of international studies. "Our society seems frustrated by foreign problems, [and] these problems will involve us more and more," Derek told alumni during a 1977 trip to South Korea. "Yet we seem to be doing less and less to prepare for them."

As Derek was keen to recognize, the fractured principles of internationalization and engagement with the world were part of the issue. These principles had evolved out of Cold War philosophies and needed to be rethought. Many international programs at American universities were divided into different units with competing priorities and approaches. Some units were more humanistic, others more scientific-oriented and supposedly value-free, others instrumental and operational. The university lacked a unifying and open approach to its worldly agenda.

Derek again wrote annual reports, speeches, and open letters, which conveyed his early ideas as a series of questions. "Power is becoming diffused ever more widely so that neither the United States nor even a small group of superpowers can dictate the course of events in many areas of the world," he wrote in 1976. "Even less-developed countries may acquire growing power as they find ways of organizing to exploit their control over vital raw materials. Hence, America must increasingly pursue its interests through a patient process of negotiation and accommodation, taking other national interests explicitly into account." Derek felt that this coming future would "profoundly affect our sense of ourselves. Although we might react by growing more defensive and insecure, it is more likely that we will respond by becoming more sensitive to the policies and practices of other countries." The questions for Harvard and American higher education were enormous. "How can we help [students] prepare for these encounters? This is too large a problem for the Core curriculum alone," he wrote. It goes to the heart of the disciplines and faculties as well. "Should we provide wider opportunities for study and work in other countries? Should we continue a century's progress in diversifying our student body by making efforts to attract more undergraduates from abroad?"

Bok also asked whether different organizations of higher learning and research would need to be created to respond to these challenges. Since problems could no longer be divided into "domestic" and "international," and "major international issues, such as population and economic development, seem much more complicated than they did twenty years ago," higher education would need to dramatically alter the way it conducted research. "For example," he wrote, "area studies have traditionally been conceived primarily as subjects of intrinsic intellectual interest or as a means of enlightening our foreign policy. As other nations begin to approach or even surpass us in their economic and social development, we will increasingly be interested in studying their societies as a means of gaining insight into new ways of overcoming our own problems in the United States."

Following these early blueprints, Bok and his dean built a comprehensive internationalization vision based on several integrated core areas: a center for international development, research centers, an institute that would train new scholars in novel interdisciplinary methods, and an innovative debt-for-scholarship program with countries in emerging Latin American nations.

Among many international initiatives, Bok promoted the creation of the Real Colegio Complutense, the RCC as it has become known around Harvard for the past 25 years. Bok's connection with the Complutense began in the summer of 1989, when the Harvard Law School conducted a program for European lawyers in cooperation with the Complutense University. Bok attended part of the program in Madrid and during that visit he was approached by the Complutense Rector, Gustavo Villapalos, about establishing an agreement between the two universities. Bok was interested in exploring avenues of potential cooperation. A central idea

for Complutense was the establishment of a “Royal College” with the potential sponsorship of the Spanish King. Discussions were held throughout 1989-90, both within Harvard and between Harvard and Complutense. Bok consulted with a number of deans as well as with a group of senior faculty with interests in Spain and international affairs. Significant funding from certain private banks was pledged and a unique mutually agreeable plan emerged. Bok traveled to Madrid in December 1990 to sign the agreement with Rector Villapalos in the presence of the King.

This agreement established a unique Center that connected Harvard with the Complutense and with the entire Spanish university system in a mutually beneficial way. During the past 25 years the RCC has supported over 2,000 students and faculty and has endorsed over 1,000 research projects, activities, and programs. This cooperative venture has recently been expanded to include more formal arrangements with other major universities in Spain. This Center, located near the Harvard Yard, has a shared governing board. Here I would like to acknowledge the current Harvard members of the RCC Academic Council: President Drew Faust, Dean Margot Gill, Professors David Kennedy, Gonzalo Giribet, Jose Gomez-Ibanez, Luis Giron, and Doctors David Golan and Ajay Sing.

Like the Core curriculum and teaching and learning initiatives, Derek's vision of internationalization was frequently contested at Harvard, to the point where the original vision has been updated and changed with time. But it has helped spread a movement elsewhere. In the 1980s and '90s, an outpouring of books and reports chronicled the rising internationalization of universities. Barbara Burn reported that Derek was the only Ivy League president championing comprehensive internationalization of the entire university and the faculties. Once again, Derek drew upon the work of many international education pioneers at other institutions, including Burn, Maurice Harari, Ralph Smuckler, and Josef Mestenhauser. By the time Derek stepped down from the presidency, Harvard had more visiting scholars than any other university. His vision of an international Harvard is gradually being realized today.

As well, Derek articulated a general vision of social and civic engagement that has also proven widely influential. In his 1982 *Beyond the Ivory Tower: Social Responsibilities of the Modern University*, Derek authored a nuanced argument for social responsibility that tried to strike a middle ground between complete Ivory Tower isolation and unregulated growth. The book was an important rejoinder to Derek's peer, the University of California president Clark Kerr, who had argued for unregulated growth; and, also to student activists, who desired to transform and radicalize the university; and to traditionalists and conservatives like U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett, who wanted the university to return to an imagined golden era of purity.

Derek again reframed the discussion. He asserted that the university should serve society, and that all groups agreed with this basic purpose. The question was

largely over means, he argued, not ends. Those core means, Derek said, had not changed since the founding of universities: its commitments to academic freedom, neutrality, and the pursuit of knowledge. And when Derek spoke of academic freedom, he referred to it not as a license, but rather a compelling duty to direct scholarship toward social causes. "Academic freedom is not merely a reflection of society's commitment to free speech," Bok wrote. "It is a safeguard essential to the aims of the university and to welfare of those who work in it." These core commitments to academic freedom, neutrality, and knowledge also enable individual professors to pursue unpopular arguments and speak out about political issues.

Ultimately, Derek concluded that the university cannot be all things to all people, or it risks losing its role as leader. It must find a way to explain its educational purposes and its "moral basis."

We honor Derek Bok today for these lucid insights into curricular reform, teaching and learning, and internationalization and social engagement. Many more achievements could be mentioned. His 1998 co-authored book, *The Shape of the River*, helped reframe the debate on affirmative action and access. In his 2003 *Universities in the Marketplace*, he warned against rising commercialization. His 2013 book, *Higher Education in America*, reminded the assailants of U.S. higher education how complex and varied the system is. His writings on moral education have inspired movements in practical ethics.

As this *laudatio* has suggested, Derek is a unique kind of individual. He has a remarkable balance of his scientific and humanistic, realistic and idealistic, generalist and specialist sides. He is a gifted thinker who is able to convey complex information in the most common of terms. He is a leader who is able to anticipate the future in the present. Emerson once said that a true leader is someone "who inspires us to be what we know we could be." For his inspiration and stewardship of the academy, we give Derek Curtis Bok our highest honor and welcome him among our Faculty.

*Carlos Andradas Heranz,
President of the Complutense University of Madrid*