

### Profile

- Universidad de los Andes
- Alumni: 55,000
- Bogota, Colombia
- [www.uniandes.edu.co](http://www.uniandes.edu.co)

### Challenges

- Build Advancement Office from the ground up
- Existing processes blocked department's professional growth

### Solutions

- Banner® Advancement
- Process Improvement Assessment (PIA)

### Results

- Tenured faculty with doctorates increased to 61%
- Scholarships granted for 989 low-income, academic excellence students
- Established 130 research groups
- Over 500 research reports generated in one year



# Engaging alumni and donors in support of institutional advancement

The Advancement Department of Universidad de los Andes, Colombia, (Uniandes) is establishing strong relationships with its alumni community which in turn enable the institution to support its quality teaching and research and provide access to talented youth who would otherwise lack the resources to attend Uniandes.

The Advancement Department of Uniandes was established in 2003 to address the institution's need to diversify its income sources and engage more with its 55,000 alumni. Today, the Department's aggressive fundraising strategy and alumni engagement programme are supported by the best practices enabled by the Banner™

Advancement solution. Ellucian consultants helped Uniandes leverage best practices through a Process Improvement Assessment (PIA).

"Fundraising through engaging with alumni who are willing to give back to their alma mater is a successful strategy that colleges and institutions leverage all around the world in order to achieve the resources they need to support their institutional advancement goals," said Advancement Director Catalina Rizo. "In Uniandes, we have adopted this essential practice in support of our vision of excellence as a University."

### A commitment to quality education

The Advancement Department is responsible for engaging alumni and donors in support of the institution's

development. It provides information and services and develops fundraising strategies and programmes to help strengthen Uniandes' reputation in Latin America and the world for providing high quality academics. Universidad de los Andes is committed to supporting three distinctive pillars: quality teaching and research; access to higher education for low income students; and engagement with society. The Advancement Department's fundraising activities support these three pillars by:

- Enabling the University to attract and retain the best faculty and help them sustain research activities and provide quality teaching. Tenured faculty with doctorates went up from 45% in 2005 to 61% in 2012, exceeding Colombia's national average of 14%.
- Helping more high-achieving students access first-tier higher education regardless of their capacity to afford it. Only one in five secondary education graduates in Colombia go on to higher education, mostly due to economic hardships. Since 2006, the institution's Quiero Estudiar scholarship programme has benefited 989 students. Additionally, the Special Programme Fund (FOPRE) provides meals, transportation and supplies to students in need.
- Furthering the development and maintenance of permanent, society-engaging research programmes that can generate useful knowledge to help address the problems afflicting the country, the region and the world. The University has 130 research groups that are categorised by Colciencias, the Colombian research and technology agency. Also, the University increased the number of papers it registered at the Information Sciences Institute (ISI) from 67 in 2001 to more than 360 in 2012.

### Engaging with alumni: the first steps

After its creation in 2003, the Advancement Department began by focusing on very basic activities such as identifying alumni and creating a database. "Later, we started designing activities to help our alumni connect with each other and then later engage with the University through services such as academic and labour information and even personal data, together with access to the library, an alumni ID card and stewardship and cultural events, among other activities," said Catalina Rizo. "We also acknowledged their

**"The great difference was we moved from putting out small fires to a more comprehensive, process-focused perspective."**

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**CATALINA RIZO**, Advancement Director  
Universidad de los Andes

social and professional accomplishments. Important fundraising campaigns were developed and conducted in parallel to these activities."

These early alumni engagement activities were supported with manual processes and without cutting edge technology or expert advice. "Most of our activities to this point were mostly trial and error. We needed something to carry out our tasks in a more systematised way," said Advancement Department Officer Johanna Hjerthen Emiliani.

As time went by, professionalising the Advancement Department staff became a critical need. The office had to grow in capabilities, staff strengths, and it needed to define position profiles and procedures. "In the beginning, we were a three-employee office and the three of us performed the same tasks," recalled Alejandro Segura, also with the Advancement Department. "Today, we are consolidated as a hundred percent professional advancement office."

### Evolving to an institutional practice

Although Universidad de los Andes had acquired Banner Advancement sometime ago, the Advancement Department had not leveraged its functionality to support its fundraising tasks. "We had a valuable solution in Banner Advancement, but we didn't know how to fully tap its benefits," said Catalina Rizo.

Banner Advancement is a powerful donor and alumni relationship management tool that includes fundraising campaign support and fully integrates with the Banner by Ellucian administrative solution.

“The solution makes it easier for alumni to financially contribute, while enabling institutions and foundations to provide their alumni with services and utilities to actively engage with their communities,” explained Félix Obregón, Customer Relationship General Manager, Latin America & the Caribbean with Ellucian.

As the Advancement Department team worked to restructure and improve its processes, it turned to Banner Advancement. However, the team had little understanding of the solution’s tools and functionality and became frustrated with the solution. “The feeling at Uniandes was that the Banner Advancement solution wasn’t working, that it wasn’t satisfying their needs,” said Félix Obregón.

Universidad de los Andes and Ellucian started working together to resolve the issues. “We realised the department first needed to analyse the activities it was carrying out from the process perspective,” explained Félix Obregón.

As result, the department engaged with Ellucian for a Process Improvement Assessment. An experienced Ellucian advancement consultant conducted a full assessment of the way the advancement staff was using the institution’s technology assets, including its

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General Manager Latin America & the  
Caribbean, Ellucian





The Process Improvement Assessment for Universidad de los Andes resulted in a streamlined alignment between the technology tool and the institution's functional needs and vision.

"The great difference was we moved from putting out small fires to a more comprehensive, process-focused perspective," Catalina Rizo added.

### Strengthening Uniandes' institutional development

The Banner Advancement solution satisfies a wide range of administrative needs in connection with the fundraising and alumni relation management priorities, including data integration, document management, business process automation, electronic reporting, remote access and online activities. Additionally, it includes a dashboard that seamlessly integrates with all other components of the Banner by Ellucian solution, enabling the employees to focus on providing better services to donors and alumni and helping them continuously improve their performance and innovate their office's day-to-day activities.

Today, the Advancement Department of Universidad de los Andes has grown to 53 people who are not only in charge of fundraising and alumni engagement programmes, but also for many other tasks in connection with brand positioning, communication, marketing and public relations, external relations and service provisioning. "The goal was to evolve toward an institutional programme with a critical, strategic function for the University," Alejandro Segura said.

This institutional strengthening and consolidation experience in the fundraising and alumni relations area has become a reference case for the entire Latin America region.

capability to support the aggressive fundraising strategy and alumni programme that Uniandes had undertaken.

The strategic consultant collected input from the advancement staff on their existing processes and compared them to the system's available functionality and embedded best processes. The goal was to make sure it was being efficiently used and meeting Universidad de los Andes' specific needs.

The conclusion was that Banner Advancement was a proper tool and that the department needed to adopt its best practices. "We teamed not only with the fundraising staff, but also with other areas, especially with finance. The goal was to eliminate all inadequate procedures that had been implemented temporarily as they had turned into a burden in the long run," said Félix Obregón.

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