

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore

# WORLDBOUND

N° 7 - 2022

## Cover Story

1921-2021

### A Century of History Ahead of Us

Take a walk through Università Cattolica's iconic cloisters: the perfect symbol of a crossroads of people, languages and cultures which have animated the first hundred years of our history.

#### Alumni

### Alumni Voices

Telling the story of our University through our Alumni's successes.

#### Research

### SUCTI

### Toward Internationalisation for All

Learn more about the SUCTI project, an effective tool to train the administrative staff, who are a crucial cornerstone in implementing a successful internationalisation strategy in any university.



UNIVERSITÀ  
CATTOLICA  
del Sacro Cuore



## MESSAGE FROM PROFESSOR PIER SANDRO COCCONCELLI

A place where the enchanted cloisters are admired by all. A place where ideas, vision and achievements are our ambition. A place where our community has worked hard to administer an international dimension to its teaching and research.

A place that has a one-hundred-year-old story to tell. A story of faces, discoveries, moments, and turning points: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.

Whether it be the integration of cross-cultural education, the increase of English-taught courses, committed strategic partnerships, the value of developing research, the innovative and technological approach of instruction, or the competitive advantage of employability - the University has set itself up on the global academic arena as a prestigious place of learning.

On the very special occasion of the centenary of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, I am humbled, honoured, and proud to celebrate the internationalisation of our University.

And it's through the colourful pages of the seventh edition of our international magazine, Worldbound, we are proud to share with our community, a successful array of events and stories which have constituted an international identity that began with the commitment of Università Cattolica's Founder, Father Agostino Gemelli in the early 1920s.

Responsible leadership has endowed mentors in the field of internationalisation and higher education ever since, providing the foundation to shape the next generation of students and graduates. In this edition, we pay homage to a list of experts who have fruitfully enriched the field with their vision of internationalisation, we dwell deeper into a project born in 2011 to raise awareness of internationalisation among administrative staff outside international offices, and we narrate the importance of Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital through a special letter sent by Pope Francis.

Students at our University are educated and shaped to be competent decision-makers, and this has been apparent through student mobility, our thriving focal point. The destinations are numerous, the experiences are personal, but the outcomes are interchangeable.

Our University has accompanied thousands of students to step outside their comfort zone, to live a different culture, hone another language, meet new lifelong friends from different backgrounds, and boost career opportunities. The number of international students has grown by 59% in the past six years, and we boast the study and work experiences undertaken worldwide and on-campus.

For some, this journey is life-changing. Who are our Alumni and where are they now? Who are our Heroes and what have they achieved? We take a trip down memory lane in this edition of Worldbound, amazed by extraordinary stories of bravery, determination, and success.

There is so much for us to be proud of at Università Cattolica. Our work is ongoing and the focus on education could not be more important, especially given the challenges that the uncertainty of the present time have demonstrated. The grit and determination have been forever imprinted.

I congratulate every person who has raised this institution to this height, but our story doesn't stop here.

I wish you happy reading.

Best wishes

Professor Pier Sandro Cocconcelli



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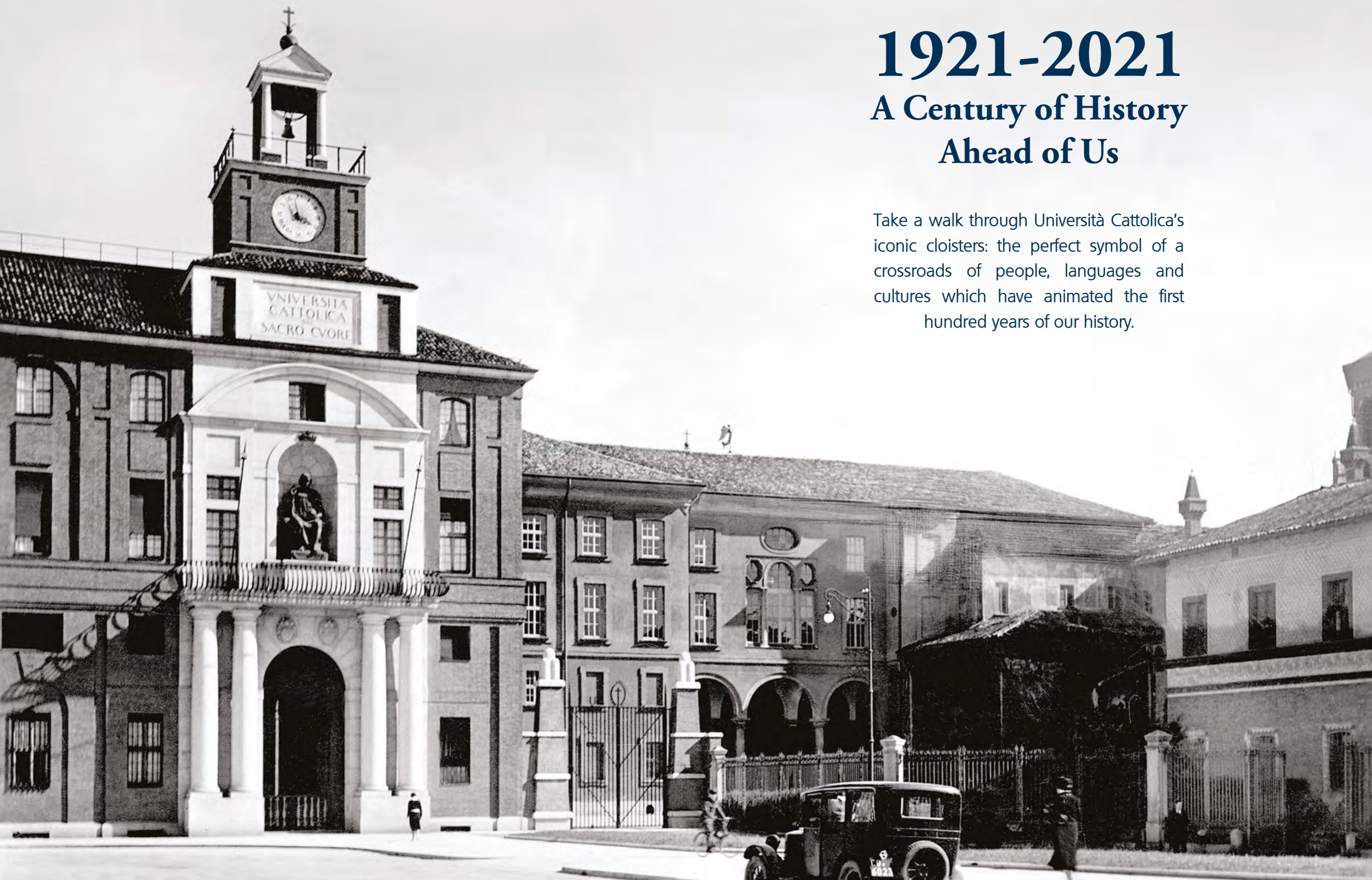
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# 1921-2021

## A Century of History Ahead of Us

Take a walk through Università Cattolica's iconic cloisters: the perfect symbol of a crossroads of people, languages and cultures which have animated the first hundred years of our history.



# A photograph in your mind as you first enter the university.

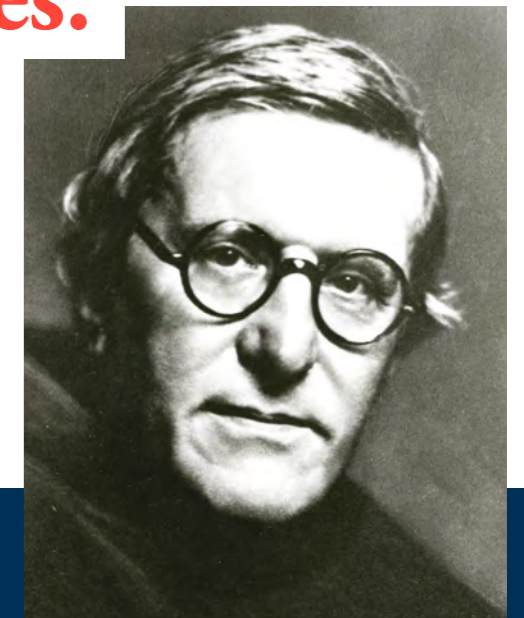
The most beautiful - and most symbolic - part of the Università Cattolica Milan campus are the cloisters. Not only were they designed by Bramante, and not only do they frame the lecture rooms and fit perfectly into the area of the city richest in late-Roman vestiges, perhaps most importantly they are brought alive by those making everyday use of them. The image of the columns joined by arches creates a lasting first impression and remains in the heart of every student - a photograph in your mind as you first enter the university. It is that area of the university that then becomes a theatre setting as students wait to take exams, a place to meet to exchange notes and ideas and a hug, and of course it then turns into an athletics track as new graduates race over the low hedges on graduation day. The two paths that outline the four quadrants are the perfect symbol of a crossroads of people, languages and cultures which have animated the first hundred years of Cattolica's history. It is incredible to think that the first international students welcomed to the university saw the very same columns and experienced the very same spaces as the class of 2021 is seeing for the first time today.



It was in fact **1924**, only three years after the foundation of Università Cattolica, when **Father Agostino Gemelli** first realised how important internationalisation was. There was no time to waste: the war had turned souls inside out although it had awakened people to the fact that the world was a very big place, there was an urgent need to turn it into a beautiful place. Within this context, the International Federation of Catholic Universities (FIUC) came about, the first international network with Università Cattolica and Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen as original members, who were joined by another **14 universities** a year later. It wasn't until **1977** that the initial official reports of the international exchanges were made available: the University of Louvain-La-Neuve was the first university that Cattolica signed a mobility agreement with and this was directed mainly towards scholars of medieval history.



# A crossroads of people, languages and cultures.



It was already clear at the time that exchange of students and academic staff was not only a way to allow for a strengthening of individual academic pathways but was also a way to make the collective environment of the university international: internationalisation is so called because it is a circle of human ties and relationships created to last over time, often separated by distance but even more often animated by the desire to find new ways to learn, to work together and to draw closer. In

this spirit Cattolica joined the **Erasmus programme** in **1988**, starting with the exchange of a small number of students just a year after the official opening of the programme across Europe. It certainly could not have been imagined that over time this would have led to a cohort of approximately **4,800 incoming international students** covering **168 nationalities** and **2,800 outgoing domestic students**, numbers that continue to grow year on year.

## Armida Barelli



# The “Elder Sister” Who Shaped Università Cattolica

There is dedication, and there is *dedication*. Someone who would devote their life for the cause of others; unselfishly break the norms of the present time to strengthen other women.

Known as Ida by her friends, Armida Barelli was *that* person.

When Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore was founded, she stood proud as the only woman amongst the co-founders. She became a **member of the Board of Directors** for Università Cattolica, established the **‘University Day,’** *Giornata per l'Università Cattolica*, still celebrated today - and in the spring of **2022**, she will be **declared blessed**.

Born in Milan in **1882**, her path crossed with Father Agostino Gemelli in **1910** and her Christian faith intensified. Seven years later, Cardinal Andrea Ferrari recognised Barelli's competence and asked if she was interested in leading a **female movement**.

Initially, she was hesitant. But when she saw the difficulties of young women at that time, her “yes” was steadfast. As if she had opened a door which was not meant to be closed, from here on, an unmistakable fearlessness shone in everything she did.

She continuously turned down her parent's marriage proposals. She founded an orphanage in China. The female movement turned into the renowned **Female Youth for Catholic Action** on behalf of Pope Benedict XV. She pilgrimaged throughout Italy and acquired the nickname “elder sister” - supporting women to see themselves as equals in their faith.

To all women walking through our University feeling misplaced or lonely: stand up tall. There is a vibrant history in the ground on which you walk - an incredible life story and courage echoing, surrounding you - a woman who would see your potential. Her imprint is still here. A woman whose name should never be forgotten, who, without her - nothing would have been possible.



Joining the Erasmus programme was just the beginning of a series of initiatives aimed at building internationalisation within and outside the university. Just to give two examples: in the **2002-03** academic year the **first double degree programme** in International Management was launched by the Faculty of Economics and Law at Piacenza with the College of Business Administration of Northeastern University in Boston and the Management School of Lancaster University in the United Kingdom, while in **2004** Cattolica joined the **ISEP network**, a global community of more than **300 universities** in **50 countries** and has since become a major partner. Since its inception, ISEP has led to **more than 60,000 students** taking part in summer, semester and annual programmes.

All this was the result of a fruitful combination of various elements: apart from the people who built and still make up both the management of the university and the Cattolica International, a great contribution to be remembered is that of the late **Tony Adams**, who we speak about elsewhere this issue of *Worldbound*. In addition to serving as Vice Chair of ISEP, Tony Adams was head of the Business Computing department at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology before taking over as Dean of Business and later Director of International Programmes. **From 2004 to 2007** he was Pro Vice Chancellor International at Macquarie University and then he and his wife founded Tony Adams and Associates, a consulting firm for the internationalisation of universities. His death in **2011** left a great void in the international community of higher education experts. For Cattolica, apart from being a special consultant, Tony Adams was central to a fundamental turning point for the structure and future development of the area. It was due to him that the **International Curriculum** was set up in **2008** and this allowed the university to compete internationally via exchanges and partnerships with foreign universities, initially mainly in North America. The International Curriculum has always been managed directly by Cattolica International. In **2008** there were eight courses in economics and business management, while now six different areas are covered ranging from Fashion & Design to Sociology, from International Relations to Media and Communication.



Establishing the International Curriculum was a driving force towards on the one hand the creation of a wide international network of agents who began dealing with new markets such as northern and eastern Europe, Asia and Australia, and on the other, the launching of the first degree courses taught entirely in English. This also made it possible to strengthen ties over time with other Catholic universities around the world, starting from Father Gemelli's initial idea through to the formation of the **Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU)**.



# SACRU

The Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU) is composed of Catholic universities with a strong orientation towards **research and excellence in education**. The board of directors is made up of the **President, Prof. Josep Maria Garrell** (Rector of the Universitat Ramon Llull), the **Vice President, Prof. Ignacio Sánchez Díaz** (Rector of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile) and the rectors of the other five universities in the network: the Australian

Catholic University (Australia), Boston College (USA), Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Sophia University (Japan), and Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portugal). The **general secretary is Prof. Pier Sandro Cocconcelli** (Vice Rector's for Internationalisation, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore). The founding universities of SACRU make up the initial nucleus of the alliance and other Catholic universities are expected to join in the coming years.



## Establishing the International Curriculum, was a driving force.

Behind this move towards expanding and refining an educational offer directed towards meeting the needs and tastes of an increasingly young market in a world which changes each academic year was a systemic concept of the world of higher education. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and an improved training offer has always been keenly sought after along with a higher level of services and processes. These have included orientation, assistance with visa procedures, support for daily life and support in finding accommodation, which over time have become integral to the work of the International Development Area. Technological tools for managing students have also changed. The pandemic last year brought with it the need to make much greater use of the internet and this has now led to student entry processes happening entirely online, from first interest right up to enrolment.



## CHEI

Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation

The internationalisation that Cattolica has engaged in over the years in the lecture rooms and university corridors has not been simply a process of trial and error. In **2009** we began to talk about setting down a methodical approach to internationalisation based on studies and research in the field and planned to invite researchers from around the world to carry out in-depth studies on the topic and to meet periodically to discuss how internationalisation could be effectively introduced into a university. This led to the university setting up the **Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI)** which over the years has focused on the theme of internationalisation, making it a transversal and wide-ranging topic involving the main actors across the university.

The centre has been able to expand its range of internationalisation activities as a result of the support given by the current **Rector, Professor Franco Anelli**. Apart from a doctoral programme offered in conjunction with the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures, it carries out various funded research projects, often with international partners. The centre is also active within the university, providing training and support not only for academics teaching international classes but also for administrative staff who are operating in contact with international students and academics. The centre is now celebrating its **tenth anniversary** and is recognised as a renowned centre in the field of higher education internationalisation.



## SOLIDARIETÀ INTERNAZIONALE CESI

Cattolica's international commitment has not been limited to student education. Much has been carried out in international cooperation and this will continue in the future. The foundation of the university's **Centre for International Solidarity (CESI)** in **2006** was the initial step towards a wide range of projects that have involved many different actors focusing

on a single purpose: to help countries that need it most to develop their educational systems, both structurally and as regards their educational offer. Perhaps more than any other area, international cooperation puts the university on the map and means that it is putting its knowledge at the service of others in the world, aware that it can have a lasting impact over time.

It has been surprising to see how adaptable we are.



The difficulties experienced over the last two years have certainly put a lot to the test, regarding not only the economic sector but also the very concept of internationalisation, since it involved so many aspects, such as travelling, cultural shock, linguistic difficulties, staying at home, the feeling of disorientation, and the desire to get moving again. Transferring what is usually done in person to an online setting has its limits but it has been surprising to see just how adaptable we are. Together with technological potential, this has meant that people have been able to collaborate successfully, even when they are situated far from each other and have never met in person. Redesigning the student journey has not been easy, but possibilities have opened up for many more people than those who usually access a university course abroad.



In the meantime, the university community is gradually starting to be seen around the cloisters again in Milan. New students are ready to build wonderful personal memories of their university years here and we look forward to accompanying them in this.



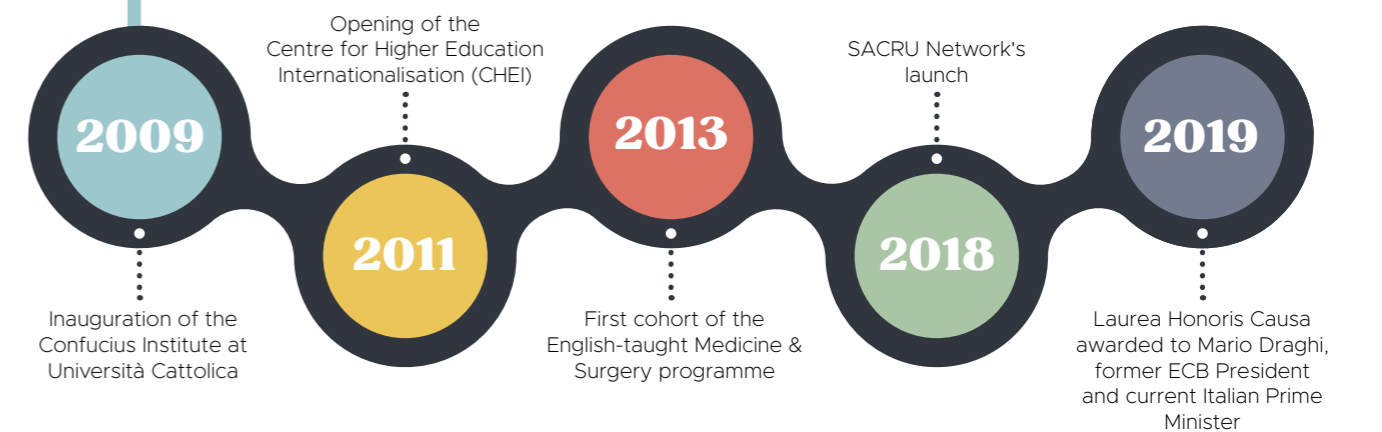
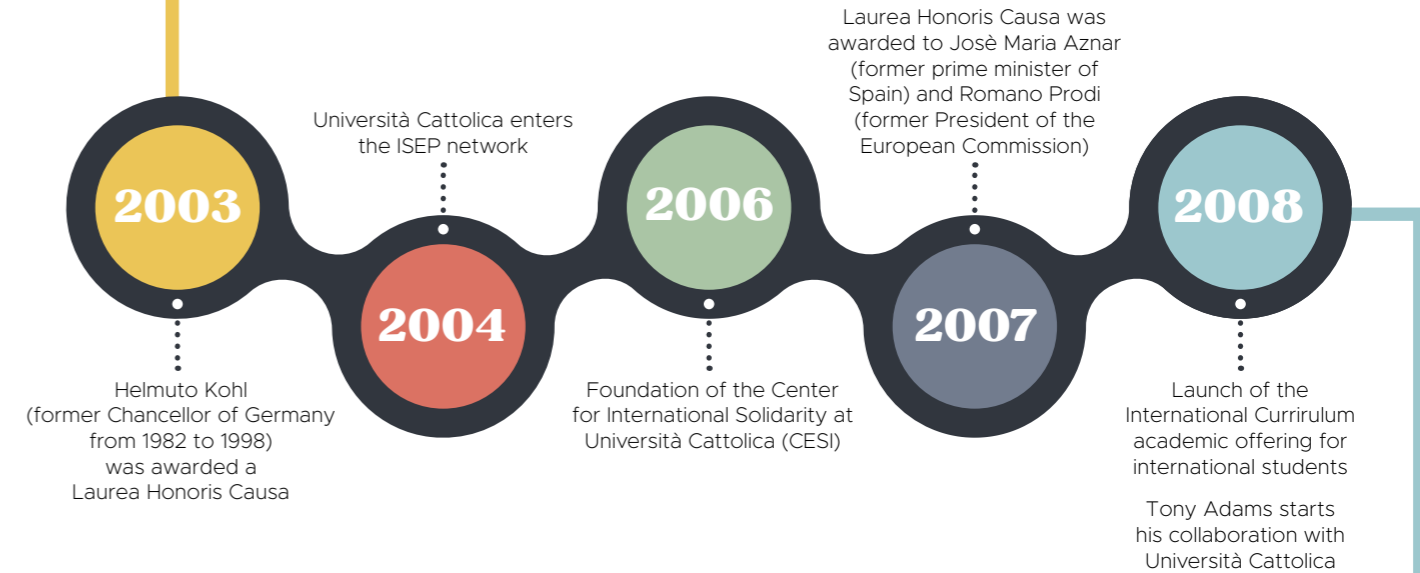
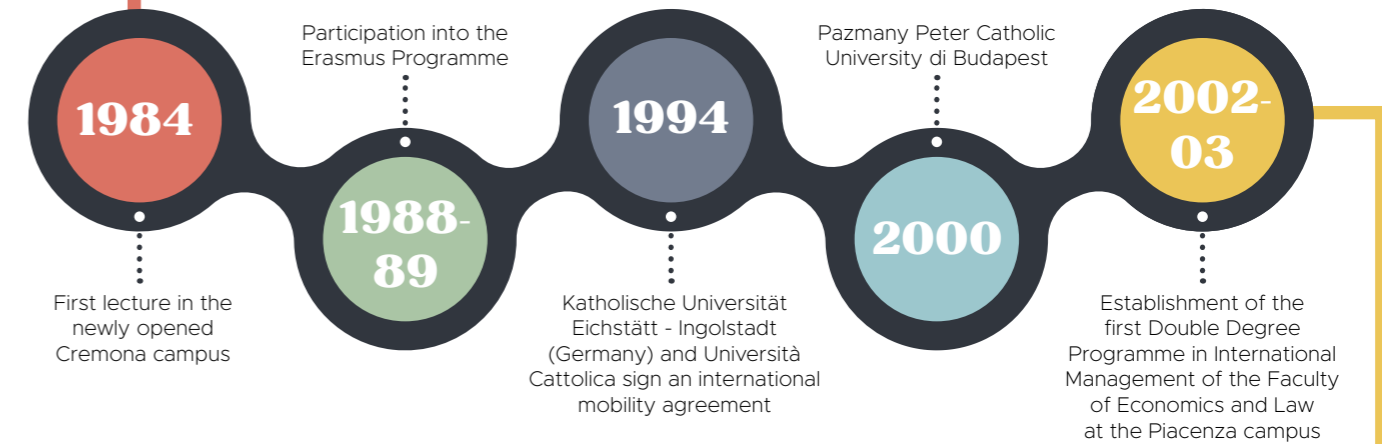
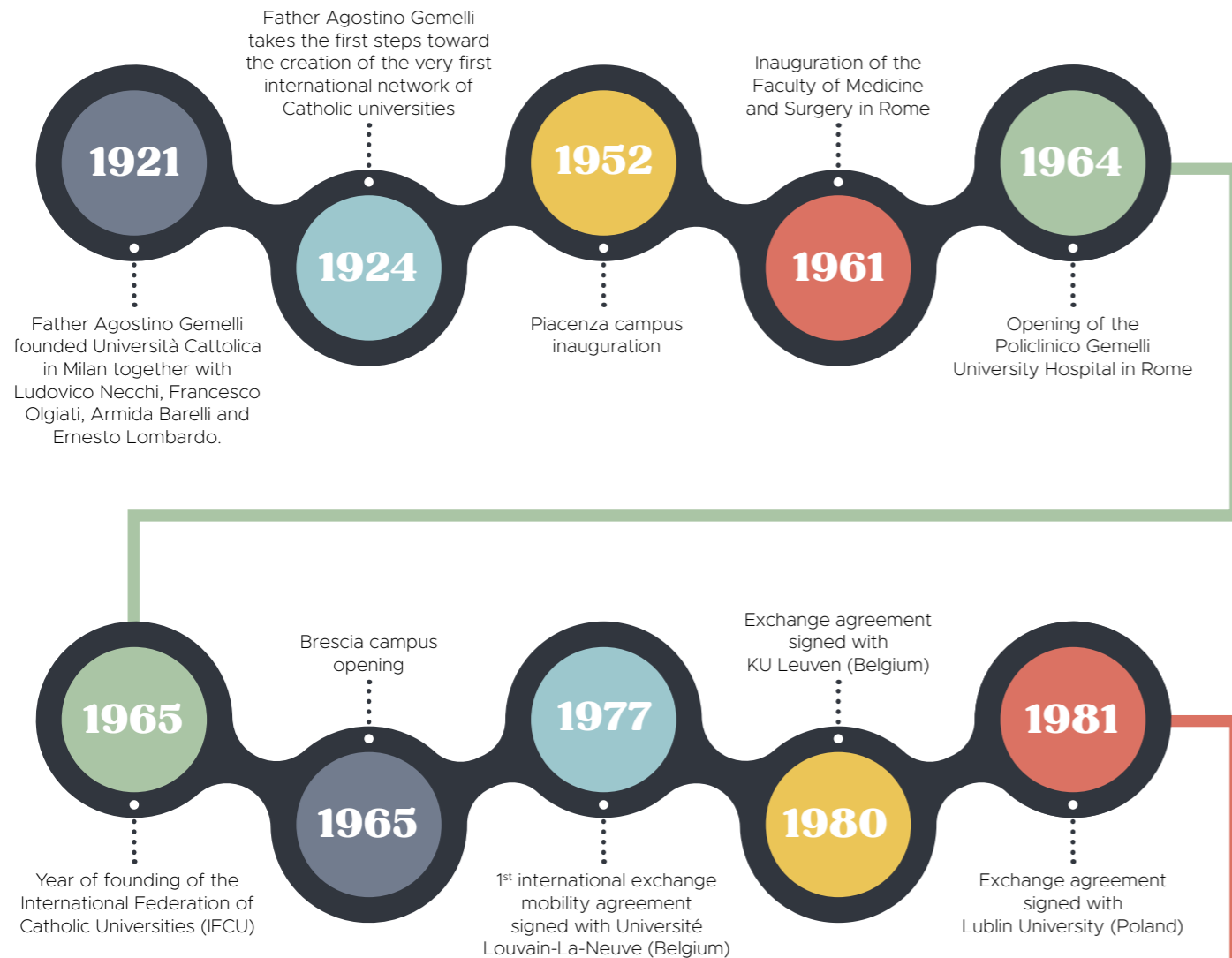
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## CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE

A very important element of internationalisation at Università Cattolica is the Confucius Institute, **the first Confucius Institute in Lombardy**, having been founded at the university in **2009**. It was the result of a partnership between Università Cattolica, the Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) and Hanban, the Chinese Ministry of Education's Office for the **promotion of Chinese language and culture abroad**. BLCU, based in Beijing, has been hosting international students for many years. Apart from its long tradition of teaching Chinese to foreigners and cultivating collaboration with universities in other countries, the university **also**

**trains Chinese diplomats**. As a result of the relations created with China through the Confucius Institute, Università Cattolica has developed a broad range of activities connected to doctorate programmes, double degree programmes and collaborations with many faculties, including Political Sciences, Law, and Banking and Financial Sciences. All this, together with student exchange programmes, is a testament to the constant commitment of the Confucius Institute in establishing university relationships based on knowledge and research which over time have led to strengthening the reputation of Università Cattolica in China.

# OUR MILESTONE JOURNEY



# TONY ADAMS

## The Positive Impact of One Man's Mentorship

The man who paved the way for curiosity and courage, while connecting people from all over the world. Whose journey continues to inspire.

"He was called 'The Godfather' of Australian higher education - but he didn't mature his network on purpose. He developed it because he loved training people and connecting with people," says Edilio Mazzoleni, Director of Global Engagement and International Education.

Tony Adam's journey did not only directly impact those around him. He is a textbook case of what it means to make a difference that continues to grow - the ripple effect of ideas, untiring work and wholehearted mentorship. And just as he was a mentor for individuals and a wider community, Tony was an inspirational voice in the narration of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore's journey towards internationalisation. He influenced its direction, and confirmed that existing ideas could work. No one's story should exist in isolation, and Tony paved the way to eliminate those distances. He was one of the first people to help narrate Università Cattolica's story - through its location and its people.

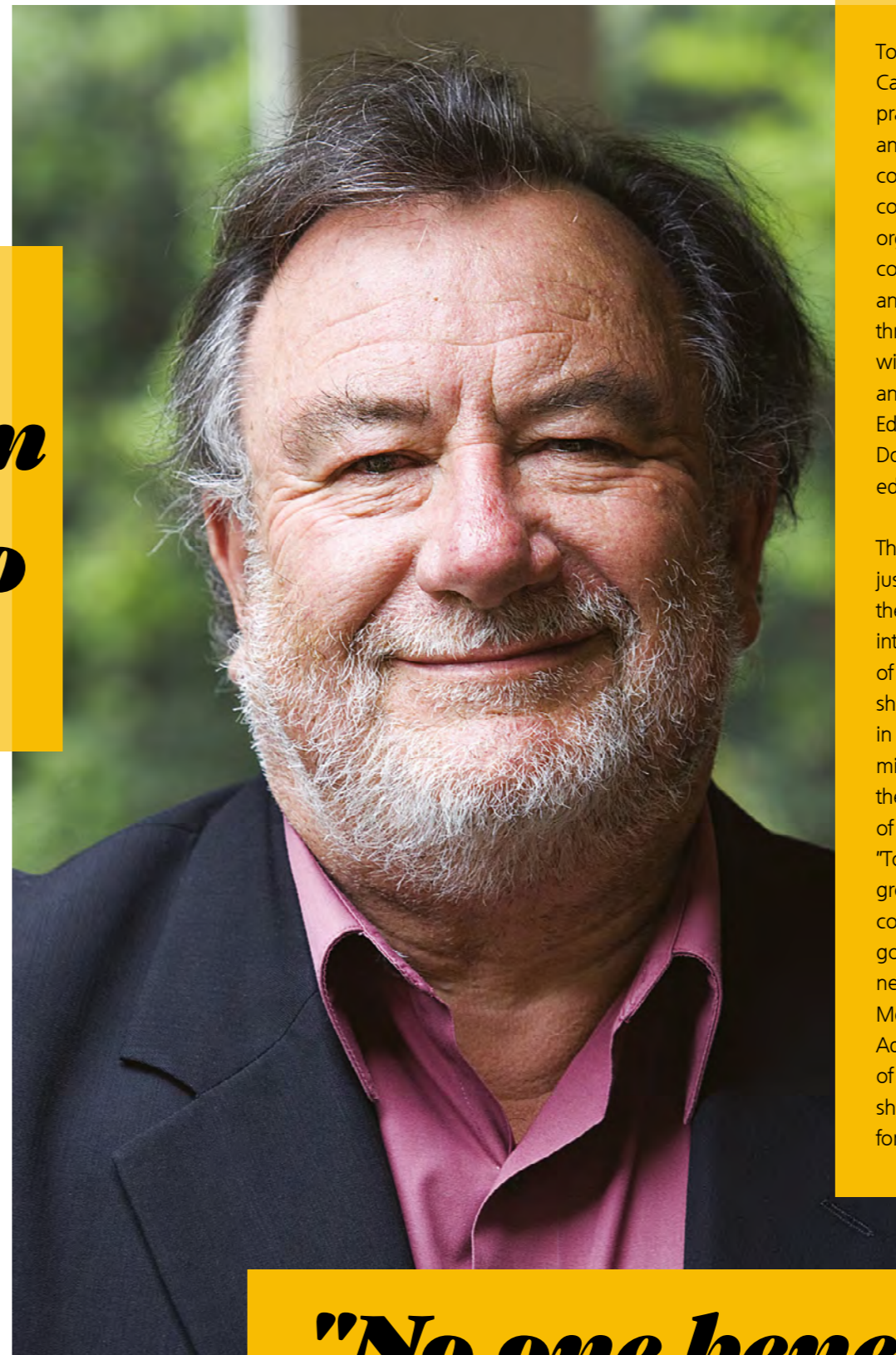
However, before Tony headed toward Italy, he had already made himself a name in the higher education internationalisation arena. As a Director of International Programs at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, he increased the number of mobility students from 1,000 to over 10,000. Tony was also the Foundation President of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) in 2004, which today is Australia's leading association for

international education.

It was not until 2010 that Tony's path would lead to Milan, Italy, working as a consultant for Università Cattolica. Edilio Mazzoleni speaks warmly about him, telling us about their first week working together. Tony was not satisfied until he knew everything there was to know about Università Cattolica, and his dedication showed no limits. So, he locked himself up in a room - from Tuesday to Friday, processing the data. Coming out only for lunch, and at the end of the day: sharing his findings or asking questions. And then, at the end of that week, Tony said, "in the beginning, I thought you were crazy. But clearly, there is some potential here, so let's do it."

From there, things were set in motion. Tony was at the forefront of developing a new way for Università Cattolica to engage with more students and professionals from all over the world. It was crucial not only because it created a space open for intercultural interaction and broadened perspectives but also because it was the way forward. It was a change that would last. "It was revolutionary what he did," Léa Senn, Associate Director for International Education at Cattolica, explains. "The things he set in motion would change the whole assumption on which the University was operating." Tony developed the concept of the research centre, which one year later, in 2011, would be up and running: the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI).

***"His dedication showed no limits."***



***"No one benefits from working in solitude."***

Today, CHEI is a crucial extension of Università Cattolica, contributing to professional practice and global research - the leadership and management group represented by countries across five continents. The centre is conducting and facilitating research as well as organising seminars, workshops and training courses. In addition, it is a centre that upholds and promotes dialogue on emerging issues through international conferences. Together with the School of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures and the School of Education at Università Cattolica, it offers a Doctoral programme (PhD) focused on higher education internationalisation.

The development of CHEI was more than just strengthening the University's position on the international map; it was in the way of interpreting the map itself, gaining the benefits of sharing knowledge, opening up, and showing that no one benefits from working in solitude. Tony could take something that might seem obvious and boil it down to the very core of its essence, reminding us of why it matters. Starting from the basics. "Tony said, I believe you are doing something great, something new. However, if you don't conceptualise what you're doing, you're not going to make a difference in our field: you need to speak the language of the people." More than that, thanks to the centre's Tony Adams Visiting Scholars Scheme, the essence of his work continues to inspire others. It shows us that Tony's journey paved the way for other people's journeys and dreams.

***"You need to speak the language of the people."***

Because through this scheme, researchers on education internationalisation worldwide can visit the centre, share their expertise through seminars, and participate in CHEI's training activities and research. It cultivates the importance of exchanging knowledge, learning more about internationalisation and what it will mean for the future. But also, exchanging stories - talking, listening and recognising your part of a bigger picture. Professionals from all over the world come to Università Cattolica, soaking in the atmosphere carrying a century of history, in the bustling city centre of a forward-thinking city, Milan. The walls echo with experiences.

Despite endless hours of working towards what he believed in, Tony never took life outside of work for granted. He never rushed a meal. He would talk business with his Milanese colleagues while watching a soccer game. And on Tuesday mornings, there was no way he would be found at work. Because he wanted to spend the mornings walking in one of the Milanese street markets nearby campus. "Not because he had to buy anything," Edilio says, smiling, "but because he wanted to meet with the vendors. That was the kind of person Tony was."

As it all starts with one person, we know it does not end there. The impact Tony made; the richness of his colourful journey is worth stopping for a moment to think about. To celebrate. A man who never took the road closest, easiest or just because it is the beaten path. "A man who showed us what it means to connect with people and guide them, and through this not only created a way for himself but encouraged the curiosity and courage of others," says Gianluca Samsa, Associate Director for Outbound Programmes and Experiential Learning at Cattolica.

It is a direct influence - on all the people who knew him, who got to witness his way of thought and be inspired by his mentorship first-hand. And there is an indirect change. For everyone - researchers, educators, students - who can do something, go somewhere, see something, learn something. All because of Tony's untiring passion to reshape and advance higher education internationalisation. "He was one of the first people who helped the University to tell its story. And today, Università Cattolica is reaching out to share other stories from all over the world." Nicole Brini, International Reputation Manager at Cattolica, tells us.

For Tony, it was never "you have to do this, and you have to do that" Edilio tells us. "Instead, he wanted you to clarify your questions before you tackle the possible answers. And it was along the way that he told you the importance of each step, rather than talking about the end point. I will use a big word now, but it was Tony's way to educate - to make the journey yours."

***"Make the journey yours."***

# The New Age of *Internationalisation*

During unprecedented times for higher education amidst a global pandemic, the question of internationalisation, one of the cornerstones of modern education, remains as relevant as ever. As Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore centenary year comes to a close, we discussed the past, present and future of internationalisation as we know it with **Pier Sandro Cocconcelli** - Professor of Food Microbiology, Vice Rector for internationalisation projects, and President of the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation at Università Cattolica - and **Edilio Mazzoleni**, Director of Global Engagement and International Education at Università Cattolica.



**Pier Sandro Cocconcelli**



**Edilio Mazzoleni**

**The celebration of the 100th anniversary of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore recently took place. The University throughout its history continues to open its doors in this constantly changing world. Considering our past and our mission, what will be the future pillars of internationalisation at Università Cattolica?**

**Pier Sandro Cocconcelli:** The story of the internationalisation of our University goes back to the years of its foundation. Our founder, **Father Agostino Gemelli**, proposed and reached the goal to create the first International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), which at the beginning was composed of a limited number of institutions. The number gradually increased and now there are 700 members part of this Federation.

We must consider the outlook that our founder had back at the beginning of the 1950s. It was just a few years after the end of World War II and there was still a lot of tension between the European countries, but the message of Father Agostino Gemelli was clear - **the role of the University is to educate the younger generation and prepare it for the society, to serve ideas, to foster international collaborations, honesty and comprehension between different people.** I think this is still a very important message in a different context, the context of a European Union and Italy within it. We must continue this process.

If you had asked this same question three years ago, my answer would probably be to continue increasing student mobility, English-taught courses and to promote internationalisation at home, which are all some of

the pillars of internationalisation. However, we had a complete change of paradigm because of the COVID-19 pandemic that completely modified how we manage higher education. The pandemic posed huge limitations on internationalisation. In the university context, one of the first victims of COVID-19 was student mobility, which was almost abolished in the last couple of years. But the human intelligence and our ability to react rapidly in crisis situations are astonishing. The entire **university system**, Università Cattolica in particular, was **extremely efficient** in **modifying our approach during the pandemic**. This led to a situation in which we realised that **internationalisation could use new tools**.

In the future, we must face two major challenges. Firstly, to continue the internationalisation process. We cannot forget that physical mobility is still one of the cornerstones of internationalisation. An **experience abroad** is not just about **attending the courses**, but it is also the **daily life in a foreign country**, which is important in a non-academic education context of the younger generation.

Secondly, we must improve the process of internationalisation at home. By increasing the number of incoming students and visiting professors, we could **create an even more international environment inside our classrooms**. Both points are a part of the strategy that we are designing for the next few years.

On the other side, we can use new tools. Now we are designing different possibilities in this new form of education, we are looking at what is the impact on the student's education and at the end of this year, we will conclude if this system was efficient enough or as efficient as the standard classroom education. Undoubtedly, our **students** and **professors** have acquired the ability to use these **new tools of education**. For example, I just finished an international class where students of my course were able to discuss the same topics with a slightly different outlook from other students in Boston and Santiago. Before the pandemic, this was not even in the mind of the professors. The impression I got after the end of this course was that the students were enthusiastic about the fact they were able to **interact with other students internationally**. The way I see it, we must **take advantage**

of the two **different forms of education and the integration** of the different modalities.

**Edilio Mazzoleni:** The first phase of our internationalisation strategy focused on increasing the number of students going abroad and the number of international students coming to study at Università Cattolica. The main drive was to **develop a global community**. Once you achieve that, you hopefully get a better perception of what it takes for the entire community - academic and professional staff, to become a real international University. Over the **last six years**, we **increased** the number of **international students** by **59%**, whereas the number of **outbound students** going on our study abroad programmes increased by around **30%**. Hence, the first phase was successful. In this first phase, we also created the **Centre for Internationalisation of Higher Education (CHEI)** to support the internationalisation process within the University.

As for the next phase, I believe we should firstly focus on what it means to **be a truly international University**. We should **raise the quality** and **increase the number of faculties** that are **exposed to an international environment**, either abroad or on campus. For instance, the average number of **international students** in our **English-taught programmes**, if we take the **bachelors**, is around **50%**. That is 50% international students and 50% domestic students. Therefore, a possible question that we might address is - what does it mean to teach such a class? Do our faculties need to acquire a different set of skills and competencies to deal with such a diverse classroom? If so, what should be done to address this issue? Are the services provided designed for an international audience?

Secondly, we should **set up new strategic partnerships with other universities around the world** to acquire resources that a single university might not have to become more internationalised. For example, due to the pandemic, we updated our IT systems. Is that enough or do we also need to acquire different methodologies to deliver our courses? That itself is a **big project**.

Additionally, if we attract more interna-

tional students, do we also need to change the range of services that we provide to our student community? There are still some services that are more tailored for domestic students only. If we want to reach domestic and international students, we might need an intervention on these services.

Therefore, the second phase of our strategic plan, if we set our anniversary as the threshold, will be focused on **making the entire University international**. I believe that most of these stances should be in that plan to move on and **make an Italian university such as Università Cattolica a truly global institution**.

**Given the unprecedented times that we are living in, it's clear that internationalisation has not reached its peak. It needs to be studied and explored, to be constantly interpreted and designed in the light of the social, technological, political, and educational changes we are facing. What objectives has the University set itself to continue guiding a constantly evolving process such as internationalisation?**

**PSC:** That is a good question, but a complex one to answer. The Rector in his speech of the centenary inauguration highlighted the need to **continue the process** that led this University over the last ten years, that is, the need to continue **improving the number of English-taught programmes** and the number of **students** and **visiting professors** both **inbound** and **outbound**. This is a process that is a part of the University strategy for the coming years.

We must take into consideration the complexity of our University. We are not only the **biggest non-public University in Europe**, but we are also a University that has programmes with completely different topics to be addressed. They share some common principles, but clearly, the education of a lawyer is quite different from someone studying physics or medicine. We have a **high variety of programmes, 12 faculties, five different campuses** and some of them are focused on **different disciplines and topics**. **Flexibility should be one of the pillars of our strategy**. For example, for my students of the Food Sciences course spending a period of study abroad in a laboratory somewhere in Europe or the USA is a big experience, but it will be very structurally

different from a student of Education. Overall, we have increased the proportion of Università Cattolica students that spend a period of their studies abroad.

Another focal point would be to **increase the number of students arriving in Italy**. It's not because we necessarily need more students, but because we are looking for talented ones. The **selection** of students is **fundamental**, and we **search for the most talented students** regardless of whether they were born in Italy or not. In the end, the **quality of the University** is **measured** not only **by the academics** but also **by the students**. The **level** our students acquire has a **stronger impact** on the **perception** that the **University has in society**.

When I walked down the stairs of the Piacenza campus and heard people speaking in Spanish and English with American and French accents, it was, from my point of view, a big success for us. This highlights that we are on the **right track to creating a truly international environment within our campus**.

**EM:** I believe the pandemic was, of course, a negative point not just for the University but for the entire world. But at the same time, it was an opportunity. We were able to **update** most of our **IT systems and classrooms**, and now we can say that we have the **technology to deliver digital courses**. That's a **great achievement**. However, only a small percentage of faculties could deliver an online course. An online course is not just about the means, such as the camera and programmes that support digital courses, but it is also about the methodology which supports the delivery of the course.

Very likely in the future universities will be focusing on how many of their courses could and should be delivered digitally. It might seem like a silly question but it's not. **Could every course be delivered digitally?** I'm referring to the courses that are, for example, under the School of Medicine. If the answer is yes, the amount of investment required would be more than for a course delivered, for example, under the School of Management.

I think a choice must be made. After making the decision, universities also need to properly train the faculties that will take part in these programmes. The question is - what

kind of **quality** would we like to **provide to students**, regardless of whether they are **domestic or international** when offering **online courses**? I believe this is not just a challenge for Università Cattolica, but a challenge that every university in the world is now facing. There should be a definition of these standards and we would make sure that we comply with them.

**Università Cattolica's participation in international networks stems back to the early years of its foundation by Father Agostino Gemelli. What contribution does our University bring to the networks to encourage both mobility and the internationalisation of research?**

**PSC:** There are different types of networks. There are **networks** in which we share the **same identity**, such as the IFCU. There we are in several working groups spanning different topics and our Rector and I are on **one of the boards** of the **International Federation**. However, this is a network with hundreds of differently sized universities in many different countries. We must consider this diversity. Some universities teach only Theology, Philosophy and Canonical Law. We are in a different situation. We are Catholic University, but **we are also a comprehensive University**.

That is why a few years ago we decided to actively participate in the **creation of a new network** called the **Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU)**. The members of SACRU are **eight Catholic universities from four continents** that two years ago decided to share a common future and activities related to their main mission of education - **increasing the internationalisation of research**, taking advantage of **research structures** that are located on the **different continents**. To give an example, if you do a study on global climate, it is much more efficient to collect data from several universities across the globe to develop really good research. These universities are highly active in the research and education community, and they are good universities in terms of parameters that are used to rate the universities.

We are also applying to be a part of networks according to the **European University Initiative**, which is a framework from the **European Commission** that aims to

**create networks** of some **20 universities** that are strictly **interconnected** and **plan a common future**.

All in all, the interest we have in networks is very wide. It can be just to be a part of important networks on an international level or to actively participate in the development of new smaller networks designed to improve the quality of partnerships and the service to students.

**EM:** That's not an easy question. There are two reasons to develop a network. Firstly, it's "cool" to be a part of a network. But, if you want to take part in it, you can't just be cool, you need to be smart as well. You need to **understand what you can get out of a given network**. The second reason to be a part of a network is to **search for suitable partners** that for several indicators are a **good match** to Università Cattolica. For instance, if you want an impact on research, on mobility, as well as course development or investment in infrastructure, then you need to partner with other universities. It is not always something that a university wants to do. There is this tendency not to work with other universities, often it's all about what we can do ourselves that is of value. That is true for almost every university in the world, but even more so for an Italian university. Nevertheless, I think we'll reach a point where **a group of universities can do more than a single university**. For example, we need to understand how we should invest our money. How do we develop a conducive environment for our students? In that case, if you can set up a partnership with a university that has already done that, you can save time on developing such an environment, as well as money. **The degree of making mistakes is lower if you partner with someone who already has experience**.

This reflects on research as well, especially in terms of **innovative research**. To be innovative you need to try a lot of things. However, not all trials have a positive outcome. If you work with other universities, you can mitigate the cost of these attempts as well as the failed outcomes.

As for mobility, to become more effective, we need to partner with universities that take mobility into the same consideration as we do. **Developing new kinds of mobility programmes that are innovative**

**requires partners** that understand what the young generation needs. For example, it is now very trendy to talk about online mobility. I am not sure whether that is something a student wants. Perhaps a **blended approach** would be more appealing to students, that is, to study from their own country most of the time, but then also provide an experience in the country the student has chosen to study in. Both could be possible. This way, you could be **very effective with the credits** you have allocated for your programme, but at the same time, you could have the **physical experience** of the place you have chosen as your destination. But again, to develop these programmes you need to partner with other universities and be a part of networks that understand the innovation that stands behind the development of these new programmes.

**Finally, when we talk about internationalisation, we are not only referring to the possibility for a student to spend a period of study/stage abroad, but we are also talking about internationalisation at home, that is, the compelling need to make even the domestic experience on Italian campuses truly international. What are the next steps our University intends to take to enable our entire student body to experience true internationalisation?**

**PSC:** Firstly, internationalisation at home starts with **increasing the number of English-taught courses and programmes**. This is a key point. Many of the new programmes in recent years at our University are English taught. As a University we made an effort to increase the possibility for students to attend courses and programmes in English. It opens the possibility of new models and tools such as **Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)**.

Secondly, we must continue the trend of **increasing the number of visiting professors**. Visiting professors are extremely useful not only because **they speak another language** but because **they bring brand new experiences**. These different experiences are **fundamental** in the education of the younger generation because it is useful **to perceive the different educational strategies** of, for example, Finland, the USA or Asia. Moreover, the **recruitment of international students** to create an **international classroom** and the **exploitation of**

**IT technologies** for connection with other universities are also important points.

Finally, we have several ongoing **international research projects**. Most of the time our research is highly internationalised, and I think creating osmosis between research activities and educational processes will also help internationalisation at home.

**EM:** The internationalisation process is driven by what the ultimate user wants. In this case - the students. Right before the pandemic, we developed **several courses** which are **offered online** together **with other universities**. We took a course and students from that given course in our university, and the students of the same given course in an international university and made them meet on an online platform. The **teaching is co-shared** between our faculty and the international faculty. Accordingly, it's not just someone participating in a course offered by another university abroad. The course is jointly designed by faculty members of the two institutions and the student participation is equal from both institutions. That, I believe, is a good example of internationalisation at home.

Other than that, we move to a more **traditional approach**, which is having our international students on campus mingle more and creating opportunities for them to be a part of our community. If we want to do that, we must **invest more in social activities**. In our culture, social activities are not run by the University. It is something that a student does in his or her spare time. We have **10% of international students** against **90% of domestic students**. There is an **imbalance**, but we need to **internationalise the university at home** and provide our domestic students with an **opportunity to expose** themselves to an **international environment** when coming to our campuses. I believe once we invest more in social activities, the rest will come. The dynamic changes completely. We must **create more space** in the university for these two groups of students **to meet in a physical space** and then, of course, we could also **increment** the number of **digital study abroad courses** we offer. Although, if you don't make domestic students understand the beauty of going abroad or getting to know different cultures in person, these digital programmes might not be exploited 100%.

## A special letter of appreciation to Università Cattolica: FROM POPE FRANCIS

The ever so familiar scent of antiseptic gel clutters the air, clipboards and stethoscopes line the corridors as waves of blue scrubs move in and out of sliding doors visiting patients from one ward to another. Though this past summer there was a very special patient admitted at Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital: Pope Francis.

The Pope underwent colon surgery at Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital on 4 July 2021. To express his heartfelt gratitude for the care and attention he received during his stay in the hospital, the Pope sent a letter to Professor Franco Anelli, Rector of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore on July 15, the day after he safely returned to the Vatican.

Pope Francis renewed his gratitude in light of three important words - **remembrance, passion** and **comfort** - which were chosen by the Holy Father during the celebrations of the Holy Mass, held on Friday 5 November, a very special and emotional event marking the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery at Università Cattolica.

*"...in today's hurry, amidst a thousand races and continuous worries, we are losing the ability to be moved and to feel compassion, because we are losing this return to the heart, the memory. Without memory, we lose our roots and without roots, we do not grow. It is good for us to nurture the memory of those who have loved us, cared for us, raised us. Today I would like to renew my appreciation for the care and affection I have received here. I believe that in this time of the pandemic, it is good for us to remember even the most painful periods: not to make us sad, but not to forget and to orient our choices in the light of a very recent past."*

The Faculty of Medicine and Surgery at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome campus was founded on 5 November 1961 and is affiliated with Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital which opened in 1964.

Over 2,000 professors, students, administrative staff, doctors, healthcare workers and patients from Università Cattolica's Rome campus and Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital attended the celebrations, gathering in the square in front of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery.

Dedicated to the memory of Father Agostino Gemelli, founder of Università Cattolica, he planned to create a University that would place humans at the heart of the health system - of research and training activities. And with that, he succeeded. The hospital is the biggest in Rome and one of the most internationally acclaimed healthcare providers in Italy, for its management, organisation, technology and humanisation of the medical field.

Additionally, Università Cattolica Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital has been ranked number one in Italy and 45th in the world by the World's Best Hospital 2021 ranking compiled every year by the well-renowned American magazine "Newsweek." The ranking analyses 2,000 hospitals across 25 countries and it takes into consideration the excellence for patient treatments, the number of well-known doctors, the quality of its nursing staff and the availability of innovative technologies.

Given the state of the art facilities available, the campus and hospital have created synergy between education, research and healthcare for many years, allowing students to put into practice high-quality theoretical preparation. And not just in Italian. Since 2013, Università Cattolica has given students the possibility to undertake a single cycle 6-year degree course in Medicine and Surgery in English, to which the University commemorated its first graduates in 2020.

Professor Franco Anelli, Rector of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, concluded during the Holy Mass with: "Holy Father, in these difficult times we are constantly comforted and encouraged by your Magisterium, by your gestures and words that have accompanied us in the most painful moments to tell us to look at the evil that challenged us as an opportunity to learn and reflect, grow and improve." In the course of these sixty years, which fall in the year of the University's centenary, added the Rector, "the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery has made great progress in its teaching and research activities while maintaining a clear and unchanged mission: to unite, as you teach us, the language of the mind, heart and hands, and to place them all at the service of the sick, in whom the image of humanity is reflected."

Following is the full letter sent by Pope Francis translated from Italian to English:

### To PROFESSOR FRANCO ANELLI *Rector of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*

Upon my return home from the hospital, my thoughts turn to you and the University you preside over. These thoughts are of gratitude and affection for the closeness I experienced, for the genuine caring and cordiality expressed in the faces around me, and for the professionalism of all those who took care of me.

Care comes from the heart. Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore carries in its name a vocation to take care of people. My hospitalisation took place during the year that 'la Cattolica' reaches its centenary, celebrating this anniversary with a phrase that affected me: "a century of the future."

The complete and cultural advancement of the person indeed opens doors to the future. In the wards at Gemelli, I have seen firsthand that there is no time for nostalgia or regrets about the past: the suffering flesh of Christ in the sick of all ages and conditions calls for a look showing care and attention, which can instil hope in moments of fatigue and move towards the future.

I am grateful to have encountered this look in so many faces, to keep it in my heart and to present it to the Lord. And in renewing my gratitude, I send my blessing to you, to your loved ones and to all those who make up the family of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, asking that you always have a place for me in your prayers.

Rome, San Giovanni in Laterano, July 15, 2021

**Alessandro Tuzzi**  
Vice General  
Manager



# FOSTERING OUR INTERNATIONAL VISION FROM STRATEGY TO ACTION

**AS VICE GENERAL MANAGER AND DIRECTOR OF ORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT, CAN YOU TELL US HOW THE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC OFFERING HAS DEVELOPED SINCE 2010 WHEN THE FIRST-DEGREE PROGRAMMES DELIVERED IN ENGLISH WERE LAUNCHED?**

It was over ten years ago that the University launched its first-degree programme taught entirely in English. This marked an important step in the ongoing and increasingly important process of internationalisation, which courses delivered in English are a part of. They may be highly visible and symbolic of the process, but they are not the whole story. Later on, with the launch of the strategic plan in 2015, the move towards being a university ever more open to the world and to various international stakeholders was further reinforced. Alongside the expansion of the English-taught course offered by the individual faculties, work was done to significantly increase the opportunities for international experiences for students and academic staff. It is in this context that in recent years almost all the Università Cattolica faculties have developed programmes aimed at a public which is not just national and "Italian-speaking": these include the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Banking, Finance and Insurance Sciences, and the Faculty

of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, all of which immediately took up the challenge as a priority, as well as the Faculty of Medicine with its Medicine & Surgery programme at our Rome campus which assigns more than half of the places available to students from outside the European Union. Despite the promotional, organisational and logistical challenges that this programme posed, it has been met with a very positive response from the students. To complete the panorama, other faculties also joined the move to English-taught courses: the faculties of Political and Social Sciences, Psychology, Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences, Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures, Economics and Law.

To summarise, we could say that the strategic plan has provided the impetus to accelerate the process of internationalisation at the University, with proactive, engaged and decisive contributions being made by the faculties in order to implement it. Without the tireless work of the faculties, it would have been impossible to achieve our goals. In the immediate future, I believe that the greatest challenge for the University will be to strengthen the academic offering and make it accessible to students from all continents, and to focus on developing our campuses and services from an international standpoint.

**IN TEN YEARS, UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA HAS GONE FROM OFFERING ONE TO 42 COURSES DELIVERED IN ENGLISH AND IS HOST TO STUDENTS FROM OVER 150 DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES. WHAT MOTIVATES THE UNIVERSITY TO MAKE ITS ACADEMIC OFFERING INCREASINGLY INTERNATIONAL AND WHAT IS BEHIND THIS DECISION?**

Looking at the first hundred years of the University, which we celebrate this year, we cannot forget its specific vocation - that of being Catholic, which by its very nature makes it universal. The University's founder, Father Agostino Gemelli, a monk and scientist who studied under the Nobel Prize winner Camillo Golgi, interpreted this vocation to move

toward a clear international perspective right from the beginning. Not surprisingly, he himself was among the promoters and one of the most active founders of the federation of Catholic universities in the world. Since the 1920s, the mission of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, which started life as an authentic "national" university, has also taken shape beyond Italian borders. Reaching beyond borders has given rise over time to a positioning and a close network of initiatives that have led to increasing the appeal of the University, which today has a student population comprising over 150 nationalities. As I mentioned earlier, I am convinced that attention will have to be focused on strengthening campuses and services to ensure that non-Italian students are properly welcomed and supported. This is concrete testimony to the central importance given to the person as well as international vocation.

**WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME AND WHAT IS THE FUTURE THAT AWAITS US CONSIDERING THE UNPRECEDENTED HISTORICAL PERIOD WE ARE EXPERIENCING?**

I believe that it is essential, and a priority, to give our students the opportunity to live on a truly international campus, which having students from all over the world can contribute to. Competition in the labour market has definitely become keener in the last twenty years, and what we are experiencing now, and what we have seen even more so over the last year, is a massive increase in the use of new digital technologies which has led to a significant reduction in distances. This puts our students in an extended, global competitive context. Given this fact, the need to train our students to be able to operate in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic context appears obvious, regardless of whether they decide to spend a period of study abroad. Internationalisation at home thus plays an important role in the

development of the soft skills that students need in order to compete effectively in an increasingly global professional arena. In addition to the hard skills obtained through learning by doing, today's students and those of the future must be trained in transversal skills such as the ability to interact effectively with a work team or to practice problem solving, being creative and innovative in doing so. The past year has imposed on all of us the challenge of making the most out of the disruptive experience of the pandemic and the transformations engendered by the use of digital platforms will undoubtedly play an important role both in redefining student services and revisiting methods of learning and assessing skills. To do this without being unrealistic, as is our ambition, we cannot but continue to see internationalisation as a strategic objective, both as far as developing the educational offer is concerned and with regard to continuing to act towards reinforcing the internationality of our campuses in line with the mission outlined by our founder.

MEET THE EXPERTS

# INTERNATIONALISATION IN THEIR EYES

The long-established benefits of internationalisation have been evident in higher education for some time now, though institutions are constantly on a quest for the best policy. International mobility as we know it today has stemmed from evolving trends, issues, and challenges. Where does Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore fit into this spectrum and how has its strategy and characteristics changed over time? We meet some experts who have been involved in this long-standing process.



# Hans de Wit

**How has the process of internationalisation changed the characteristics of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore? And what are the policies and practices that Università Cattolica adopted to promote internationalisation abroad and internationalisation at home?**

I became familiar with the international activities of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore around two decades ago, first via the active presence of Edilio Mazzoleni and his enthusiastic team of colleagues of Cattolica International at the annual conferences of the **European Association for International Education (EAIE)**, and in the United States through its associations **NAFSA** and **AIEA**. My Australian colleague, the late **Tony Adams**, was an engaged advisor to Cattolica International and brought me in to provide additional support. This resulted in a decade of **intense involvement** in the **international operations** of the University, the first five years as **Founding Director** of the **Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI)**, now celebrating its tenth anniversary at the same time the University is proudly celebrating its 100 years of existence, and then for the past five years as a member of its **Advisory Board**. Over the past decades I have seen how the University has grown in its international strategy from a strong but relatively isolated international operation to an even stronger and more integrated, transformative and comprehensive **internationalisation strategy** for the whole of the University.

Internationalisation has two related components, internationalisation abroad and internationalisation at home. The first one is focused on inbound and outbound mobility of students, faculty, administrators, projects and programmes. The second one is addressing the curriculum, teaching and learning and the campus environment for students, faculty and administrators, both the local and the international ones. Università Cattolica over the past decades has primarily focused on the first component, **creating opportunities** for its students and faculty to go abroad for part of their home degree (summer, semester or year) as well as promoting international students to study for a full degree or for a shorter period as part of their home institution's degree in one of the campuses of the university. To make that happen, the University has established **partnerships with institutions of higher education in other countries**.

Over the years this has provided an international, Italian and a specific Cattolica **experience** for many local and international students and faculty involved in these exchanges. Together with international research collaboration and capacity building projects for higher education in developing countries, in particular in Africa, the University has undergone a **transformation** from a rather local and national university into an **institution of global dimensions**. International is now embedded in many of the academic and administrative units of the University, in most of its academic programmes, and in its strategic institutional and departmental policies and approaches. Its **internationalisation** is no longer marginal and ad hoc as it was before but **central and systemic**.

Does that make the University unique in the Italian or European context? I would not dare to say so. Italian and European institutions of higher education have seen a strong stimulus of their international dimensions, supported by programmes as Erasmus+ and the research framework programmes. But both in its numbers and in its strategic focus, Università Cattolica is **leading** in the country and is a **substantive player** at the European and even **global level**. It is also thanks to its global approach, more international than other European universities, not focusing primarily on European cooperation but establishing partnerships with universities in all parts of the world, from North and South America to Asia and Africa. **Cattolica International** is central in these accomplishments but has **successfully integrated** the **international dimensions and activities** through the whole institution, avoiding in this way the risk of isolation of international from the rest of the University.

Building on the success of its partnerships and inbound and outbound mobility programmes, in recent years more attention has been given to the second component, **internationalisation at home**. Even though the mobility programmes have been successful and important, they only reach a small part of the students, faculty and administrators. To further mainstream internationalisation and reach all students, faculty and administrators, it is important to work on a strategy for internationalisation of the home campuses. Developing international programmes as part of the curriculum, training faculty and administrators on **internationalisation of the curriculum** and the support services and creating an international campus environment where local and international students and staff experience not only the

richness of the local Italian atmosphere but also of other parts of the world, is a new but important dimension asking for attention and action. Several initiatives have already started, and others will develop. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the University and the region, has created challenges for mobility but also **opportunities for a different approach**, including **virtual exchange and mobility**.

The **creation of CHEI ten years ago** not only supports this strategic internationalisation process at the University but is also a manifestation of the importance of internationalisation for the University. The centre, of which I had the honour to be its Founding Director, **provides support** to the central administration and the different academic and administrative departments of the University, for instance on internationalising the curriculum, on the use of English as the language of instruction, and in assessing policies and practices. But the centre also **supervises** local and international PhD students in their doctoral research on the internationalisation of higher education, resulting already in a substantive number of doctoral graduates and academic publications. The Center did lead a major study for the European parliament on the internationalisation of higher education, resulting in a **report** that not only has **influenced European policy** but also globally has influenced the **future direction of internationalisation**.

**Cattolica International and CHEI are successful manifestations of how the University has internationalised and how it has become a mainstream strategic and transformative part of its current and future direction.** Their success though has only and will continue only to be possible thanks to the commitment of the university leadership, its staff and its students to make the University more international, inclusive and innovative.



# Mary Anne Grant

**ISEP has facilitated global student mobility for over 40 years. What are the main trends, issues and challenges of international student mobility that have changed and remained the same?**

The **International Student Exchange Programme (ISEP)** was created in an environment where **engagement with the world** was deemed increasingly important as part of higher education due to **globalisation**. ISEP responded to a desire to **infuse US undergraduate education** with an international perspective by expanding **access to study abroad**. ISEP was also responding to the demand for access to US higher education by international students. Deep engagement with the rest of the world was a driving force which led to ISEP's signature programme – direct enrolment in universities outside one's home country for a **culturally immersive academic and personal experience**. Another significant factor for ISEP had to do with **financing** those experiences. ISEP was a pioneer in levelling the playing field by basing programme costs on what students paid at their home institution and utilizing the resources of higher education institutions to provide international study opportunities for students from other countries. Finally, **diversity of destinations** and **openness to all fields of study** were important motivators to the creators of ISEP.

These elements – **access, diversity and affordability** – continue to be key aspects of international student mobility today. When it was created, ISEP was responding to the desire for **greater engagement with the world** and increased access to international education opportunities at an affordable price. This trend continues. Over the years, ISEP **expanded its offerings** to include **new types of programmes**, such as fee-paid study abroad, exchanges for the entire ISEP global network (not just two-way exchanges between the United States and other countries), short-term programmes, internships, service learning and volunteer opportunities. ISEP's flexibility and resiliency in facing challenges have **sustained the network for more than 40 years**.

How to provide international experiences continues to be a challenge just as it was when ISEP was founded. It is difficult to manage a large number of relationships and programmes, particularly with regard to **quality, advising and support, academic and personal learning, safety, security, and health**. ISEP has addressed these important aspects of student mobility, not by insisting on a one-size-fits all approach, but by

building mechanisms that allow institutions to participate in keeping with their own resources and institutional approaches.

When ISEP began, a daunting challenge was the **collection and dissemination of information** about academic courses and logistical support available to students. There was no internet, email, fax messaging, or other technologies. Communications were cumbersome and slow. Of course, this has changed dramatically since the early 1980s when ISEP was getting launched. Today, technology makes the rapid dissemination of information possible and **new applications** help students to find a **wealth of opportunities** for an international experience. The complexity of managing a worldwide student mobility organisation cannot be overstated. It took years for ISEP to develop **stable and systematic mechanisms** to address all the various components of an education abroad. Like so many others, ISEP has utilized technology and its online presence to manage programmes and access to information, key elements for any successful student mobility operation. Since its founding, over **60,000** students across more than **350** universities in **50+** countries have participated in **ISEP exchanges** and other programmes. While such numbers are impressive, they are small in relation to growing demand, even in the aftermath of the coronavirus. ISEP has been consistent and committed in its mission of access, diversity and affordability. These characteristics – **commitment, consistency, and change** – are key for the future international student mobility.

**What is the added value that a university such as Università Cattolica can bring to the ISEP network?**

Higher education institutions, like Università Cattolica, are the heart of ISEP. By coming together in a **worldwide network of universities**, ISEP tapped into a rich resource of nearly unlimited possibilities for students. As a membership organisation, ISEP is dependent on its member institutions to serve students. ISEP does not create programmes. Rather, participating institutions provide incoming students access to their existing academic offerings and name a local coordinator to manage student mobility programmes. Also, universities often develop programmes that facilitate the **integration** of incoming international students, such as offering courses in English as well as the local language. As a **global exchange network**, ISEP has refined its

ability to draw on the resources of the network to serve the common good. No institution is favoured over another and **trust and recognition** are key drivers, demonstrating that **when higher education institutions work together, they can do far more for their students than any can do alone**.

ISEP member universities **help** their own students through the application process for ISEP programmes, **support** students throughout their international experience and help them **reintegrate** on returning home, especially in **securing credit** toward their home degree. Member universities also provide all **support services** for incoming students, helping them to get off to a good start quickly as they seek to take advantage of educational and personal growth opportunities while on programme. It is the member institutions, rather than the ISEP central office, that provide services directly to students. ISEP's member institutions are deeply committed to the success of their own students and those of other members. International education staff, university administrators and faculty recognise that they share responsibility for supporting all students on the programme, and take an approach that signals, **'I will take care of your students just as you take care of mine.'** Trust and shared values among ISEP's member institutions are hallmarks of an ISEP experience.

Università Cattolica has been one of ISEP's most active members with **no limit** on what the university could do to support student mobility. This has meant offering access to its regular university programmes, creating new study opportunities, providing access to study in English, offering comprehensive student advising services for both outgoing and incoming students, and ensuring every student could have an international experience. In short, Università Cattolica has set a **high standard** for the **academic and personal success** of every student and serves as a **model for other institutions**. The most successful ISEP members are those that incorporate participation in ISEP programmes in a **comprehensive internationalisation plan** and leverage the network to advance its own agenda for students, faculty and the university as a whole. **Università Cattolica has shown how to utilise the ISEP network to its best advantage, welcome and support students from around the world, and build a strong profile of partnerships as a leader on the global stage of international education.**



Photo credit Asger Hunov

**RAJANI NAIDOO** is Vice-President (Community and Inclusion) Professor and Director of the International Centre for Higher Education Management at the University of Bath in the UK. She is a graduate of the Universities of Cambridge, UCL and Kwa-Zulu Natal. She holds a UNESCO Chair in Higher Education Management, sits on the R&D committee of the European Foundation for Management Development and is Visiting Professor at Nelson Mandela University, South Africa. She is also head of the race equality task force at the University of Bath. She has delivered keynotes at numerous international conferences in a wide range of countries and her funded research has included higher education and social justice, competition and collaboration and equitable international higher education partnerships. She has been appointed as an expert advisor to numerous international bodies and has recently been an international reviewer for the Finnish Academy of Science. She was previously on the executive governing council of the Society for Research in Higher Education. She is a member of the research and development steering committee and sits on numerous journal editorial boards including the British Journal of Sociology of Education, the International Journal of Sociology of Education and Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education. She is co-editor of a book series on Global Higher Education (Palgrave) and on African Higher Education (African Minds).

# Rajani Naidoo

**What role do you think universities should and can play in our lives now and in the future? What should they be providing to society as a whole?**

I think one of the big issues that universities should contribute to is **how to heal the fractures in our society**. We have escalating poverty, violence, and inequality - the whole future of our planet is endangered, so I think universities through **research, teaching and social engagement** should tackle these issues. We should look very carefully at how the research and our teaching impact these factors. I think it's important to understand that all **universities can't do everything**. We need to have a system that works very well where different universities tackle different aspects of these issues and are valued and rewarded for it. The most important thing that universities need to reclaim is the **freedom to call truth to power** because that's something that we are losing and the only way in which we can do that is to **stand together collectively** and fight against incursions to academic freedom.

**How do you feel what's happened in the last few years has interrupted or accelerated the trends that you've been seeing?**

What has happened in the last few years has been both positive and negative in terms of the pandemic. I think the one amazing thing that has made me proud to be in the higher education sector is the extent to which **higher education institutions worldwide** responded to the crisis in so many positive ways - from contributing to masks and ventilators to the development of the vaccine in such a short period. When I think about all the reports that we get from our managers on our **doctoral programme in higher education management** who represent **more than 50 countries**, the collaboration across borders that has happened is incredible. Overall it's taught us how important it is to collaborate, what some of the negative implications of competition are, but it has also taught us about **how to exist and how to reach people virtually** and that's been quite interesting. This has transformed how we teach, how we manage, how we relate to each other, and so on.

**People getting real work experience before they leave university is a very positive trend. How much focus on practice-based learning has taken away from the sense of university as a 'quest for knowledge?' Has this all become too tactical?**

I believe it has had to become practical and tactical for certain groups of students. Placement puts you in a very good position to **enter the job market** so there are many reasons why placements are useful as well as for learning very important skills on the job. I think the problem is, we either go **very academic** where we are widening our horizons and focusing on intellectual development, or we go **very practical**. It would be **very good to have a mixed curriculum**. You can get the depth and then you can touch on other aspects of the curriculum. This period gives us a good opportunity to look at **what we want young people to learn**.



ALUMNI

# ALUMNI VOICES

Telling the story of our University  
through our Alumni's successes.

# AMBASSADORS OF AN EDUCATION OF EXCELLENCE

A conversation with Ilenia Pagani



**Ilenia Pagani**  
Head Manager General Rectorate  
Secretariat, Institutional Projects and Alumni

**"OUR NETWORK BRINGS TOGETHER PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS"**

**"MEETING IN PERSON NOURISHES A SENSE OF BELONGING"**

**Can you tell us how the Alumni network started?**

The Alumni Network is a large network of former students spread all over the world. The first Alumni Association at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore stems back to 1930, whereby the founder of the University, Father Agostino Gemelli, created the Ludovico Necchi Association in memory of his dear friend and co-creator of the University. Based on this legacy and the recognition of the strategic importance of this project, in 2017 all existing former student associations came together to form the first official Alumni Association at the University. Università Cattolica is a comprehensive university and over the years several associations have been created to involve graduates from its 12 faculties connected to certain courses, University residencies, and graduate schools. Some of these associations have a detailed and well-defined internal structure, while others have been created for social media networks only. The goal of the associations is to create a place where everyone can come together and share their experiences and value their expertise. This process requires a lot of work, but the success can be seen in the active and successful involvement of our Alumni in the various initiatives offered by the University.

**Initially, the project was launched at a national level but its success quickly spread to include international entities. Can you tell us about the birth of the international committees or chapters?**

One of the most exciting aspects of this project which primarily involves the Alumni staff is the constant growth and evolution of the network.

The international chapters were created during different periods. The Chinese chapter had already been launched by the Ludovico Necchi Association in Shanghai, but the network continued to grow in major cities such as London, Brussels, New York, Boston, Washington, and Dubai. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we organised very prestigious events around the world. Meeting in person nourishes a sense of belonging for graduates who are living away from home. The chapter and its events become an opportunity for former students to meet, network, and feel connected to graduates who have experienced a similar cultural journey.

Our network brings together people with different educational backgrounds, from doctors to lawyers, from managers to trainers. As Università Cattolica celebrates its centenary, we are proud of almost 300,000 people who have graduated from our University - professionals who now live and work all over the world. And despite the diverse professional backgrounds, the urge to reminisce about the time spent in our famous cloisters is very prominent, regardless of the year in which they graduated.

The International Committees are a point of reference both for Alumni who move abroad and for the new generations. In the future, we would like to set up mentorship projects at an international level. The aim is to create a trusted strong support network always willing to help out, for example, if a student is leaving for Shanghai to start an internship, that student needs to know that someone will welcome him/her at the beginning of this experience and mentor him/her throughout the experience.

Università Cattolica Rector, Professor Franco Anelli, always affirms that the story of our University is told through its Alumni who are the ambassadors of a successful training method and education of excellence.

**Over the past year, Alumni events have had to adhere to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. How have you dealt with the Alumni community during this period?**

The pandemic has accelerated communications at an international level. We have adopted new tools and used creative ways to stay in touch. Before we would meet up once a year, whereas now, thanks to the pandemic, the international committees meet virtually every three weeks. This frequent communication has allowed us to work on developing the committees and their initiatives.

On the national front, we have organised several cultural events related to the COVID-19 health emergency. Additionally, the Career Insights Series project was very interesting, which was organised together with the UCSC-UK International Alumni Committee - a series of online meetings were dedicated to Università Cattolica near and recent graduates, along with three important companies: the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), EQT Partners, and Goldman Sachs. These meetings were an opportunity to learn about the evolution and changes taking place in an international market, the skills required to operate in this context, and the selection and recruiting processes in the sector.

The general aim of all these initiatives is to provide its graduates with the opportunities to understand current situations and those related to the professional world. The university continues to be a place of training for everyone: students, lecturers, graduates and administrative staff. The pandemic has allowed us to use innovative tools to achieve this intergenerational exchange, even during a time when everyone was forced to slow down.

## Latest international events

- **February 2022:** Celebration of the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Dubai Alumni Chapter
- **December 2021:** Christmas celebrations at the London Alumni Chapter reunion
- **November 2021:** Launch of the New York Chapter
- **September 2021:** Alumni reunion in Dubai on the day of the Expo Dubai 2020 opening

## FILIPPO MERLI

General Manager - HERE Fashion Hub

The lockdown in 2020 bridged the gap between Milan and Hong Kong and demonstrated the power of networking, bringing together 30-40 people at a time. What is the value of creating such a strong community?

UCSC-HK-Chapter satisfies the need to be a point of reference and aggregation in a megalopolis, 10,000 km away from Italy, for all former students based there.

This need has been evident in this last period, in which human interaction, had suddenly been shifted almost entirely digitally, and gradually the sense of loneliness for many has grown, causing emotional stress. With the events organised, we have contributed, albeit minimally, to creating a team spirit, a sense of camaraderie, which meant mutual support.

Other meetings are planned closely and with great satisfaction, other alumni are making themselves available to actively participate in the organisation



of upcoming initiatives. The main goal is to create strong and lasting connections over time, which go beyond the digital sphere, with people with a lifelong common ground as relevant as having spent years of life studying at Università Cattolica. Many good things can arise from connections with strong foundations, from friendship to business opportunities.

Finally, a special thanks to the Alumni office which made a very important contribution to the start of this chapter, without which it would not have been possible to bring together such a large group of alumni.



## SIMONE CENTOLA

International Lawyer - Withersworldwide, Singapore Alumni Chapter Leader

## PAOLO DE BERARDINIS

Asia Pacific Director - FACCIN S.p.A



**How important is the role of the Cattolica International Alumni Committee in an international context such as that of Singapore, where the Milanese universities have decided to create a network such as Dual Milano (Università Cattolica, Università Bocconi, Politecnico di Milano, LIUC Università Cattaneo)?**

The Cattolica International Alumni Committee is a remarkable network of friendly and engaged alumni led by our Alumni Association Cattolica – Associazione Necchi.

The Alumni Association kick-started and supported our earlier initiatives of mapping out and organising our alumni presence in the city-state and Southeast Asia, which developed into our Singapore Alumni Chapter. For the first time, several alumni across the Asia Pacific connected among themselves and reconnected with our Alma Mater, discovering their alumni identity as well as the array of activities offered by our University to students and alumni. Our initiatives in Singapore include networking, mentoring, professional development, private discussions and public events.

The Committee encourages and supports interactions among alumni Chapters in Asia Pacific and beyond, fostering discussions across our Asia Pacific Chapters in Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing. It also supported and promoted our local events as well as the establishment of Dual Milano. The latter is a local alliance among the alumni of four Milanese universities (Università Cattolica, Università Bocconi, Politecnico di Milano, LIUC Università Cattaneo) created by one of our alumni, Paolo De Berardinis, to enhance knowledge and opportunities for collaborations by leveraging on the world-famous Milano brand.

The Singapore chapter looks forward to further collaborating with the Committee once our local chapter activities will resume at full regime after the current restrictions ease.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. ssa Sciarrone Alibrandi, Vice-Rector of Università Cattolica and President of Alumni Cattolica – Associazione Necchi; Dott. Devecchi Bellini, Secretary General; Dott.ssa Pagani, Dott.ssa Simonati and the whole alumni community in Singapore and beyond.

## MARCO VILLA

Chief Executive Officer - MV Advisors | Mirade Ventures

You moved from Singapore to Dubai for work, two cities where the Cattolica International Alumni Committee is present. Do you think that the increasingly widespread presence of international committees can help create professional and personal networks?

The quality of our network plays a fundamental role in determining the quality of our lives. Especially for those living abroad and moving around among different cities, the presence of a solid structure of international committees can make a real difference in enhancing personal and professional experiences. Furthermore, the diverse nature of the Cattolica Alumni Network creates invaluable ways to be introduced to brand-new social clusters and gain access to people and stories we might otherwise never meet.



DUBAI



## ALESSANDRO NETO

Diplomat

Rector Professor Franco Anelli said: "Together with the scientific production and cultural richness, the greatest gift that Università Cattolica has given to the Italian society is a large population of people educated at our University. Since its founding, the University boasts over 300,000 graduates, testimonials that have applied the intellectual foundations and soft skills learnt during their educational path - into society, into their work and their families. The social value of a university is defined by the quality of the people it has educated. Università Cattolica is proud to be represented by its Alumni all over the world." How does it feel to represent the Alumni Committee in the heart of Europe?

Being educated at Università Cattolica was a turning point in my life, both professionally and privately. It was during the years of study at the Faculty of Political Sciences that I approached for the first-time diplomacy and international relations and thought this would have been the field of my application. A few years later, I had the opportunity to join the diplomatic service at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and I will be always grateful to Università Cattolica for enabling me to build on my intellectual



foundations and further develop my critical thinking and soft skills through an open-minded approach. I am therefore very proud to represent the Alumni Committee along with many other professionals worldwide who enjoyed the same educational path and enrichment from Università Cattolica in their field. In my experience abroad as a diplomat, I can witness first-hand the very extensive and valuable international network of the Università Cattolica, which is based on talented and high-quality people who are simply giving their small contributions to making the world a better place. Despite we Alumni are scattered in many places across the five Continents, Università Cattolica is still our home at the crossroad of our lives.

## CARLO BIZ

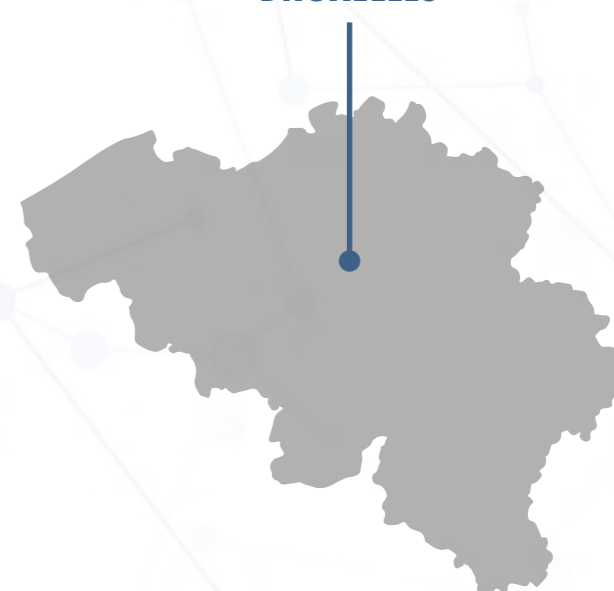
EU Official - European Parliament

What is the added value of taking part in the Cattolica Alumni Network?

"Working for the European Union (EU) and living in Brussels was for me the natural consequence of my special interest in EU law and EU affairs, a passion that started from interesting law courses in Largo Gemelli and now has turned into my job as an EU official. Thanks to the Cattolica Alumni Network, I could feel connected - digitally, but also humanly - during this long period of mandatory social distancing. Indeed, in these recent troubled times of travel restrictions and lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, being a member of the Alumni Network allowed me to feel at home while being outside of my home country, Italy. The numerous initiatives and interesting exchanges with other fellow Alumni brought to my memory the pleasant and enriching university years as a law student in Milan, defined by learning from huge books, discovering nice places and starting long-lasting friendships. The renowned added value of Università Cattolica is the sense of community it has shaped in 100 years across borders, generations and cultures. This is perfectly reflected in the Alumni Network, which brings together a wide array of committed people with different skills, professions and interests, but all closely linked to each other through the same set of core values."



BRUXELLES



## VALERIA MICELI

Policy Coordinator -  
Cabinet of Presidente von der Leyen, European Commission

What is the added value of taking part in the Cattolica Alumni Network?

When I meet members of the "Cattolica family" in many different corners of European institutions, politics, media, companies, I simply feel at home. Friendships at Università Cattolica last in the long term. Their fabric is a sense of belonging. Shared values are their glue. And quality is a common feature. I am particularly grateful to Università Cattolica Rector Franco Anelli for his commitment to fostering the community of Alumni around the world and in the heart of Europe.



## ALESSANDRO CAFFI

Growth Investor - PSG

**Has the Università Cattolica International Alumni Committee helped you to create a strong international network? If so, how has it benefited you?**

The United Kingdom Cattolica Chapter allowed me to expand my network in London by meeting new people that share the same educational background, that I didn't meet at university. Some of them are now friends as well as good contacts for my professional career. I have also become aware of former Università Cattolica students at my company allowing me to leverage these contacts within the organisation. Finally, we have established a relationship between my firm and the Alma Mater producing a concrete outcome for the Chapter.



## MARIA FIORITO

Solicitor - Vardags

**From Puglia to the Milanese dorms to London. What are some of your abiding memories from your educational path which persuaded you to engage in the International Alumni Committee?**

Growing up in a small town in Puglia has triggered my initial desire to evade into a more challenging and stimulating contest, which I eventually found at Università Cattolica, Milan campus. There I had the opportunity to live in the university residence, Collegio Marianum, which was an even more enriching educational and personal experience. Memories of my days at university and at Marianum with my peers, sharing notes from classes, revising together before any exam, year after year, and succeeding and progressing altogether, made me aware of the importance of being 'part of the wider picture' under the same institution. After graduation and qualifying as a lawyer, I decided to broaden my experience even further by moving to London.



**Have the tools, services, and lifelong learning projects offered by the Cattolica Alumni Network helped students to increase their professional and cultural knowledge?**

Some of the events have been particularly useful in expanding my knowledge in areas like sustainability and European Union. A network like the one in Università Cattolica is also very useful in expanding your knowledge beyond your professional sphere. The many, diverse disciplines hosted at Università Cattolica allow you to reach areas of knowledge out of your comfort zone.



I often look back on those memories of my days at university and the network of support I found in Università Cattolica and at Marianum, thinking how precious my experience was and how helpful it would be to have a similar "net" now that I was a working professional in a big city like London. When I learnt about the Alumni project, I had no hesitation in deciding to join this incredible new "wider net." I find it extremely helpful and supportive to have the opportunity to share my experience, knowledge and skills with other professionals from my same background and working all together on new ideas and projects. The feeling is like a throwback to my days at Università Cattolica and I am proud to be part of this international project.

## TOMMASO MAZZARELLA

Head of Operations Vertage

**What does it mean for you to represent the SMEA association in New York and contemporarily be part of the Alumni Committee? How can these two bodies work together?**

When I look back at my education path, I see the strong synergy between my five years in Largo Gemelli and my experience at The Graduate School of Agri-Food Management and Economics (SMEA) for my master's degree.

The transversal skills gained while studying Political Sciences greatly match the different competencies acquired while in Cremona.

Representing both associations is a great honour, while also being an opportunity to recreate those synergies at an Alumni level.



Both Università Cattolica and SMEA constitute excellencies in the academic world and the agri-food world, so it would be only natural to have their former students interacting on a professional level.

The power of a cohesive and dynamic network translates into multiple occasions for its members: mentoring, career progression and insights about a specific company/industry are all achievable targets.



## CLAUDIA BRAGLIANI

Senior Vice President,  
Digital Communications Manager - Lazard

**The United States chapter has recently been established. What are your future expectations? What activities do you expect the committee to carry out?**

The United States Alumni chapter is a fantastic opportunity to establish meaningful connections and expand my network. As an expatriate, you're always looking to meet people with a similar background to yours, and Università Cattolica is a special bond for us all. I'm excited about in-person events (finally!) and mentorship opportunities that the group will create. I'm also looking forward to connecting with students who may be interested in knowing more about career experiences overseas.



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NAUSICAA  
DELL'ORTO

# ON THE GRIDIRON OF FEARS AND DREAMS

Whether forming a team, heading for a touchdown, or running towards a position in NFL, Nausicaa Dell'Orto is intimidated neither by her fears nor dreams. The game must go on.





**“WHEN YOU FIND  
YOUR PASSION,  
YOU FIND  
YOUR PEOPLE.”**

was barely popular among men in the land famous for soccer. Yet promptly Nausicaa found out she was not the only female who wanted to leave the sideline and move the ball into the opponent's end zone. “When you find your passion, you find your people.” Gathering a team of equally enthusiastic girls and approaching a coach they were met with nothing but an ironic chuckle. Nausicaa smirks, “The chuckle that people give you when your dreams are too big.” After all, the game is too tough for girls, right?

We meet her wearing long signature braids hanging over a dark hoodie. It appears we have caught her on a quick break, as if she were about to pick up the prolate spheroid shaped ball and head back onto the field any moment. Is it game day today? Her strong, confident, yet kind personality beams even when meeting her virtually.

**“IN YOUR LIFE, YOU  
WILL FIND MANY  
SHUT DOORS, BUT  
IT TAKES ONLY  
ONE YES.”**

Despite being a timid child, it did not take long for 16-year-old Nausicaa Dell'Orto to drop the shiny cheerleading pom poms she had started shaking only a year before and enter the field herself when she saw a male team go for it. Today we meet Nausicaa, not only as a tight end player in American football and one of the first women in Italy to propose a female team but also as a championship winner, Italian National Team captain, NFL Films storyteller, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore alumna.

Back when Nausicaa first became interested in the sport, American football

It didn't stop Nausicaa, nor the rest of the team. Believing they had every right to play Nausicaa and the girls found a coach that believed in them, and the game was about to kickoff. “In your life, you will find many shut doors, but it takes only one yes,” Nausicaa recalls when a teammate's father agreed to teach the girls. Soon enough girls dressed in shoulder pads and carrying old equipment from the 1980s were seen playing in Milan's Parco Sempione gathering a large circle of young women interested in something unheard of in Italy's female sports field at the time. Their circle quickly grew from just seven to 25 girls, and not long before Nausicaa together with the rest of the newly formed *Vichinghe* (i.e. Vikings) team marked the first-ever female American football match in Italy playing against Bologna *Neptunes*, another team that had similarly popped up in the Emilia-Romagna region. The game was truly a sight to see, their dangling feminine braids contrasting the enormous helmets and wide shoulder pads in a

barely adequate muddy field. Yet nothing could be compared to the emotions the girls felt once the match had been won and the crowd started to cheer. “For us, it was like the Superbowl.” And just like that not only could girls play full contact, but people were watching.

However, football was not just a pass time for Nausicaa. Her passion for football and her fearless attitude towards both the game and life exalted into a full-scale career.

Nausicaa recalls the second courtyard of Università Cattolica's main building as her favourite place. “I would sit under the tree in the middle of the *chiostro* (i.e. cloister) to find some kind of balance, to stop everything for a second and breathe.” It is perhaps during one of these peaceful breaks in the serene courtyards that Nausicaa decided she would apply to the international programmes offered by Università Cattolica. Her first adventure took her to a summer seminar in Storytelling at Menlo College, California followed by a masterclass in TV Production and Marketing at Boston University. It is through these programmes that Nausicaa realised she not only wanted to tell stories but also change lives. Her degree in Languages, Communications, and Media at Università Cattolica and the subsequent international experiences led Nausicaa to an internship at Sky Sports in 2017, an experience that she admits greatly helped her career and introduced her to valuable contacts in the field.

Today, Nausicaa's ability to apply lessons learned in football to her philosophy of life and resilient work ethic has led to a successful career working as a storyteller for NFL Films. But just like game day, Nausicaa's journey to the National Football League (NFL) was anything less of a sweat. No matter which side the coin lands on the big day, how many fumbles she encounters on the field or how many hurdles she must overcome in life, Nausicaa insists there is no looking back, regardless of the situation, you must always move down the field. “Until I am not down on the ground and buried, I will keep going.” But it was not always like that.

While completing her internship, Nausicaa like many young graduates was searching for a job and applying for anything she could grip on to, at one point even working for a Visit Denmark tourist office and seriously doubting her football career under the pressure. Nausicaa recalls thinking “Why am I even doing this?” - a thought that seems inconceivable to anyone meeting Nausicaa today.

**“THERE IS NO  
LOOKING BACK,  
YOU MUST  
ALWAYS MOVE  
DOWN THE  
FIELD.”**





**"IT'S NOT HARD  
WHEN YOU  
DO WHAT YOU  
LOVE."**

Once the storyteller position at NFL Films in the United States opened, there were no doubts that there was only one person as fit for the job as Nausicaa, even despite the position's unparalleled competition of professionals. With the ball in her hands, Nausicaa was heading straight for the offence. "This job belongs to me. The field belongs to me." After 13 gruelling interviews, her last task to reach the end zone was to write a story. Garnering her experience on the field and the storytelling knowledge acquired during her studies, Nausicaa presented the board with a story about Penelope, a young cheerleader in Milan, whose dream was to play American football. Little did they know at the time that Penelope was Nausicaa's middle name. Shortly after she scored the position and transferred to live in the United States full-time, working and playing in the hometown of her favourite NFL team Philadelphia Eagles. The shift from the field to behind the camera was not difficult either. "It's not hard when you do what you love."

Nausicaa's spirit is distinctly unbreakable under the weight of expectations and doubt. Her unique ability to always run the extra 10 yards, play overtime and find the strength and motivation in people who share her passion and goal is what keeps her going. "I moved to the United States, worked 70 hours per week instead of 40, I even made *ragù* and *lasagne* for the whole crew," she adds, laughing that they needed just a little bit of that "Italian touch."

**"THIS JOB BELONGS  
TO ME. THE FIELD  
BELONGS TO ME."**



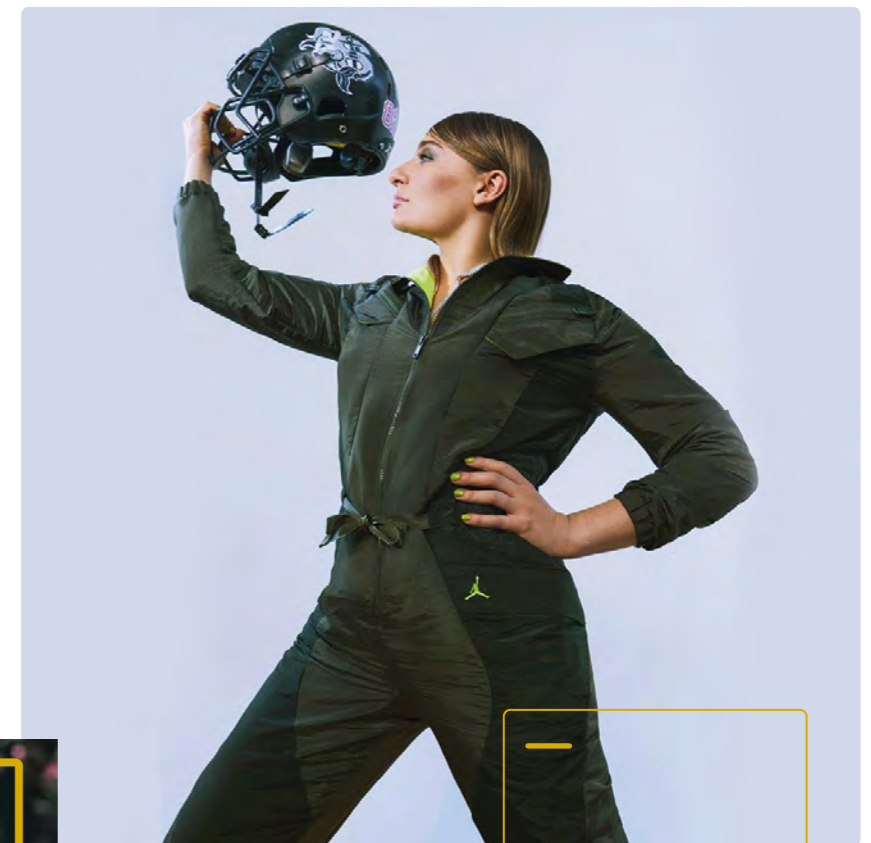
But perhaps above all, it is her ability to stand tall in the face of fear. After all, fear is not something she avoids, instead, Nausicaa uses it as an instrument to move forward. While many see trepidation as something unwelcoming, Nausicaa insists "If your dream scares you, it's the right dream." For her, the only approval that matters are her own and the approval of people who believe in her dreams.

Shifting teams and cities to share the enthusiasm and encourage the female American football movement in Italy, Nausicaa has played in eight teams, six cities, and two countries, but the game has only just kicked off. Her number one advice to other girls seeking their dreams is to listen to their hearts and bodies. "Sometimes you think you don't know the answer, but you do."



Ultimately, her real power is to take the fear as a champion and use it to score points on game day, in life, and in her career. She is a hero of her own life and a driving force for many others who share the same passion and incentive. Nausicaa is a combination of courage, heart, inspiration, and the values driving her forward are the same ones so many of us forget when facing fear. But the goal is only one.

**TOUCHDOWN!**



**"IF YOUR DREAM  
SCARES YOU,  
IT'S THE RIGHT  
DREAM."**



**SHE IS A HERO  
OF HER OWN  
LIFE AND A  
DRIVING FORCE  
FOR MANY  
OTHERS.**



"Medicine has the unique and rare quality of being not just a science but a form of art."

Having such a vibrant background, part of Sanal's life was always about moving around. Once he finished school in the United Kingdom, Sanal knew he wanted to experience a new culture, language and even cuisine, "I wanted to go abroad and explore, I didn't want to come out of it with just a degree, I wanted to come out of it with knowledge about another country." Italy was the perfect place and Sanal notes that by the graduation date he had become a different person. "When you start university, you're still just a kid, even if legally you are an adult. I came out of it as a different person and that's not just because of the degree, it's all about your experiences." For Sanal, Rome is where history lives and questioning why one would choose one of the most beautiful cities on Earth for their study years is unheard of.

## Sanal Abraham A YOUNG DOCTOR'S JOURNEY ACROSS BORDERS

When a brilliant young doctor graduated from the Medicine and Surgery Faculty at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, he was unaware of the trials, tribulations and unmatched growth that awaited him as a recent graduate amidst the outbreak of a novel virus.

An academically outstanding, driven, and young international student was one of the first to graduate from the newly founded Medicine and Surgery programme at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Rome, on July 25, 2019. Today we meet the 26-year-old doctor amidst a Fellowship in Surgery and Critical Medicine in Dorchester, England and being a handyman around his new home with a remarkable story to tell.

Sanal Abraham's extraordinary journey has taken him all over the globe. He is of Indian origin, born in Saudi Arabia, schooled in the United Kingdom, and first arrived in Rome to study Medicine at Università Cattolica in 2013. While there is no one straightforward answer to why Sanal chose to study medicine, he admits he was always interested in sciences but believes medicine has the unique and rare quality of being not just a science but a form of art.



During his years at Università Cattolica, Sanal concluded that when studying medicine everything is about your initiative and commitment. "When you graduate from medicine, you don't graduate knowing everything. You know only the tip of the iceberg, there is still so much to learn," says Sanal. Medicine is a never-ending learning process and for him, Università Cattolica provided an

excellent theoretical basis for further practical learning. "I am a strong believer that the practical aspects follow the theoretical aspects. If you have a strong foundation in theory, the practical aspects will come along once you start working." Indeed, Sanal admits that later, even his peers complimented the fine theoretical background he had acquired.

However, Sanal's story is not one without obstacles. Sanal had only three days of rest after graduation before returning to the United Kingdom and putting on his new white scrubs to embark on the two-year Foundation Programme aimed at providing workplace-based learning for junior doctors and helping them to form a bridge between medical school and speciality training while rotating among different departments and experiencing various specialities. Yet, by the end of 2019 news of a novelty virus spreading in China started to appear all over the media and by early 2020 it had become a worldwide pandemic, leaving even experienced doctors in awe and humility.

**"If you have a strong foundation in theory, the practical aspects will come along once you start working."**

**"Everything is about your initiative and commitment."**

Despite the programme being new, Sanal soon came to realise that, when embarking on any new journey, if you are driven by your own ambitions and clear targets about what you want to achieve from the degree, you will find success. "There were a lot of opportunities that my colleagues and professors would present to me" remembers Sanal. In fact, Università Cattolica Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital, the best in Italy (based on the World's Best Hospital 2021 Ranking by Newsweek) and among the best in the world, provided the aspiring doctor, who was never afraid to seek out experiences thanks to his own initiatives, with many chances to

meet the patients and face real-life situations, "I said 'Look, this is what I'm interested in, can I spend some more time doing it?'" Moreover, Sanal's determination and desire to learn took him as far away as Tanzania and India on a few weeks long learning trips in hospitals on his own accord.

Sanal remembers the start of the pandemic as both an enduring and remarkable experience. When the first wave hit, he was working in the Accident & Emergency Department in Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital in Grimsby, Northern Lincolnshire, England as part of the Foundation Programme. The Accident & Emergency department is the first point of call for any patient and

Sanal was seeing a lot of people in need. Soon, the department was categorised into red and green categories, where green stood for non-COVID-19 related patients and red for COVID-19 affected patients. Sanal remembers the situation getting worse, "Eventually, red took over all the departments because that's all you were seeing at the time."



When it was his time to rotate among the specialties, Sanal ended up in the Respiratory Medicine ward. There he got to see a side of the pandemic he did not fully comprehend in the Accident & Emergency department. "It really put things into perspective for me because in Accident & Emergency what you see are the people who are first presenting a complaint. You don't see the full picture, you don't see how they evolve, you don't see if they get better or worse. While in Respiratory Medicine you saw the evolution of these patients. Some of them, unfortunately, did not do very well and some deteriorated even further."



The pandemic was not just an unexpected experience for the freshly graduated Sanal academically but a challenge for his theoretical knowledge. He admits it did take its psychological toll as well, especially for the "newbie" doctors such as himself. "You were seeing patients unwell and dying on quite a regular basis, which is not something that you are used to in any way when you start your career in medicine." Yet, given the circumstances, Sanal's character remained unbroken and the opportunity to make a difference was gratifying. During the pandemic, Sanal got the chance to do things he would otherwise not be doing, which further increased his competencies as a person, especially in the way he deals with the patients, which, Sanal remarks, involved a lot of emotions and opened up a more altruistic side of his persona. "It was an incredibly demanding and emotional experience as a person because it's something that usually a consultant deals

with or somebody who's more experienced. Having been in a situation where you have to do that yourself was quite endearing to me as a person and as a doctor."



**"The opportunity to make a difference was gratifying."**

While it certainly involved emotionally taxing aspects, being in a position where a lot more was expected of Sanal helped him become more confident as a person and a doctor, especially in the way he deals with patients. "I am a more competent person in terms of my practical and theoretical knowledge because I was at a point where decisions came down to me." Undoubtedly, despite the hardships, the experience of the pandemic helped Sanal reinforce his passion for medicine and feel more comfortable not only as a physician but also as an empathetic individual. Empathy for Sanal is all about truthfulness when facing life or death situations "It's more about being open and being truthful to your patients."

**"There was a drastic change in my personality and who I became as a person."**

After facing the pandemic and rotating among the various hospital departments as part of the Foundation Programme, Sanal is now taking part in the Fellowship training in Surgery Critical Care which is part of the complex journey of becoming a Specialist Physician.

When looking into the future, Sanal's choice lies between being in Otolaryngology or Critical Care. While they are two different career paths, Sanal is actively doing a mixture of both in the Fellowship and intends to finish his specialisation in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Sanal is always open to opportunities and doesn't exclude a chance of moving abroad once he will become a specialist, "I think this will open the doors to me quite a bit because it would allow me to work just about anywhere." New Zealand, Australia, America or a return to Italy are just some of the options Sanal is considering. He also contemplates returning to his roots and working as a specialist in India another plausible option. However, Sanal doesn't consider himself a person who plans too much ahead, "My life has been quite unpredictable until now."



While Sanal's professional life is remarkable, once the scrubs with pockets full of pens and the stethoscope are off, he leads a well-balanced and homely life. Apart from racing through the hospital halls and navigating the mysteries of the human body, Sanal has just bought a house in his hometown in the United Kingdom and is doing refurbishment works while taking care of two little kittens who as Sanal laughs "keep him quite busy." In his spare time, Sanal enjoys playing badminton and going out with his friends to unwind after a hard day's shift. He even keeps in contact with some of his past colleagues from Università Cattolica who have come to visit him in the United Kingdom. Sanal himself can't wait to return to Rome once the travel restrictions become lighter, "I went to Rome as a teenager, and came back as a 23-year-old. I think there was a drastic change in my personality and who I became as a person in terms of my individuality, in terms of my character. I consolidated who I was while I was in Rome." For Sanal, Rome and all the people he met and looked up to helped to build the person he is today, "I'm just waiting for things to ease down a little bit more and the next thing I'll be doing is taking a flight back to Rome."

Whether he is being a handyman in his new home, facing the excruciating challenges of the pandemic, performing his daily routine as a professional in the hospital or thinking about the next flight to Rome, Sanal's mission-driven spirit, reinforced his passion for medicine and desire to move forward in his journey is unmatched. Sanal has the distinctive ability to be truthful and analytical while not losing sight of empathy and what it means to be human. Whatever the hardships, Sanal has come out of it stronger, and his story has many more adventurous chapters to be filled.

# The of a Blank Canvas

With a passion for reawakening history, his art is one of a kind - and so is his story. Challenging us all to think: **where would I be, if fear of failure could not stop me?**

**Josh Young** is an artist, designer, and tastemaker based in Washington, D.C. A graduate of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Josh's six years spent in Milan heavily influenced and crafted his overall artistic style. After returning to the U.S., Josh began working as a designer in the textile industry, in New York City's Flatiron District.

Inspired by the fusion of **Old World** elements married with **bold, modern-day techniques**, he has been experimenting with an **avant-garde approach** to classical portraits since 2009.

Josh has appeared in Architectural Digest, Elle Decor, Vogue Italia, GQ Italia, The Wall Street Journal, Domino Magazine, MyDomaine, O, The Oprah Magazine, House Beautiful, and The Maryn. He has collaborated with Nate Berkus Associates, Christian Siriano Interiors, Marie Flanigan and large-scale commercial projects like the newly built Draper Hotel in New York City and the Bulgari Hotel in London.

He also has worked with brands such as Williams-Sonoma Home, Jo Malone London, Circa Lighting, and One Kings Lane. Josh is scheduled to show at next year's renowned Salone del Mobile in Milan.



"I HAD A CALLING INSIDE. I KNEW I WAS GOING TO DO SOMETHING CREATIVE IN LIFE. EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THAT WAS GOING TO BE."

*Josh Young*

# JOSH YÖUNG

DESIGN HOUSE

Not until the city, its pace and its people settle. Not before and not until he walks up the stairs - from his apartment to the studio - his story can be properly told. During the day, bold strokes of sunlight sketch the room's palette of warm whites and ivories. Fresh tulips and hydrangeas framed like artworks themselves and piled-up coffee table books on antique furniture with titles such as *Cézanne*, *Gauguin*, and *Giacometti*. Every angle of his home is picture perfect like a magazine spread, reflecting his personality - the contour of a perfectionist, but with quirky "Klimt-kissed" details. Now, this elegant mosaic of contrasting elements is portrayed through dim lights and burning candles. The studio is taking its sleepy breaths in the company of the man who at this hour, is more than awake.



As the dramatic piano and string orchestra of Abel Korzeniowski fills the room, he looks at the blank canvas and begins painting.

Working with layers takes time - allowing each to dry before moving on to the next. If there is a part of his life where he is patient, it is for his beloved art. But for life in general, he does not wait for things to happen. With a winsome smile on his face, his family and friends are used to witnessing, usually without any notice, how he throws himself into the realm of uncertainty - a move, an idea, a change - from one day to the next. "I have always found myself at those pivotal ages or pivotal moments in my life, where I feel like there's a change needed," and perhaps it was this impulsive intuition that brought him to Milan in 2009.



"I HAVE ALWAYS FOUND MYSELF  
AT THOSE PIVOTAL MOMENTS  
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THERE'S A CHANGE NEEDED."



"TO BE AROUND THAT DYNAMIC WAS INSPIRING."

Without speaking the Italian language and coming from a small colonial town in Pennsylvania, United States, this was his first time outside the Eastern Time Zone (EST). He was about to open the door to a new chapter of his life as an exchange student at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Humid summer weather welcomed him at Milan Malpensa Airport and so did a new way of living. "It was a cultural shock, and to describe it as a shift is an understatement." Still, his choice was in no way wavered by unfamiliarity. If anything, it was the opposite - the new impressions woke him up.

Walking out of the historical university building in awe of the airy rows of white pillars against brick-red architecture to Piazza Sant'Ambrogio and the narrow Milanese streets around it. Passing the most well-dressed people he had ever seen, driving Vespas to work or drinking an espresso at the bar. He would stop by old bookstores, visit local art exhibitions and soon realise this city had everything he wanted. "It offered the best of both worlds. It was a true Italian city, but it also had this energy I was looking for at the time. A characteristic city that was always looking forward and this was perceived not only from the city's vibe but from the people too. To be around that dynamic was inspiring."

## ALL AROUND HIM, THERE WAS ART.



He soon became familiar with one of Milan's most renowned events, *Salone Internazionale del Mobile*. So much more than an annual exhibition showcasing contemporary furniture and design from countries around the world. He quickly fills his agenda by attending all the trendy events and installations at Fuorisalone, a set of exhibitions that animate Milan in correspondence with "Salone" as the locals call it. A week during which the city transforms itself, and all districts in Milan awakens. Every corner of the city explodes with colour and turns into a medium to promote designers' visions. The indescribable energy and life become the foreground of a truly innovative design capital, everywhere you look. A Milan that inspires. Raising its unique voices.



After these events, he would be viewing the city with the same immersed gaze. All around him, there was art: textures of facades, balconies coloured by terracotta pots and flowers. Smiles. Wrinkled hands carrying fresh fruit from the market. Proud buildings and their narratives - and there was one spot especially that filled his heart. Standing on the majestic veranda of Villa Necchi Campiglio, nestled close to the Porta Venezia district in Milan, a green oasis in the middle of the city, he fell in love with the architecture and elegance of the iconic 1930's villa. And it soon became his happy place.

Just as his 13-year-old self would lose track of time while perusing the shelves of antique stores - especially fascinated by the old portraits, or as he saw them, "mirrors to the past." Just like what happened when he got introduced to impressionist artworks for the first time and was struck by this other, more abstract way of viewing the world around him. Just like that, he would now, as a 19-year-old in an international country, find himself with a slowly shifting perspective. He soaked it all in and let the colours, sounds and people of Milan guide him.



## HE LET THE COLOURS, SOUNDS AND PEOPLE OF MILAN GUIDE HIM.

And when it was time to go back to the United States, his sudden intuition inspired another decision. "I knew by going back it would mean going back retrospectively in every sense of the word. I wanted to stay longer - I needed to push myself to go even more outside of my comfort zone." Oblivious as to where it was going to take him, and still not knowing what his creative path would be, he enrolled in Università Cattolica's bachelor's degree in Communications and Media Studies. The city that was supposed to write a brief chapter of his life for six months ended up being his home for six years.

## HE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE ART OF INTERIOR DESIGN.



As the music shifts and *Clair de Lune* fills the room, he smiles, and for a moment, he stops painting just to listen to the melody of the piano. Looking around the decorative studio, it is evident that his style and aesthetic has developed since he fell in love with the art of interior design. He promises himself that the next time he goes back to Milan, he will visit the apartment where it all began.



In the neighbourhood Porta Genova, Milan, in a street called Via Savona, there are many stories to be told, and his is one of them. The street runs parallel with the famous *Navigli* canals where people gather to eat and drink in the evenings, resembling a crowded *Café Terrace at Night* by Vincent van Gogh and transforms into a vibrant outdoor flea market on Sundays. He had just moved into an apartment that would be the first where he was given the freedom to decorate and express his artistic talent. There was no one to judge, and his roommates were encouraging him and seemed to enjoy the constant and unexpected design changes he would apply and execute within the space. Still a student at the time, his way of decorating an apartment was unprecedented. But it was quintessentially him.

One approach could have made it liveable, beautiful and nothing else, but it was more meaningful for him than that. An old building has not only been the home for breathing and living people but for lifetimes. Carried on its shoulders, imprinted in the scratch of a living room floor, where different tables have been placed and dragged or embodied in a choice of texture. And that's exactly what he wanted to embrace, the history within our space.

He would walk around the neighbourhood and find objects on the street that people had thrown away, repaint them and use them to turn his room into a piece of art. In hindsight, this process of creating would colour his entire way of thinking. "I take that same approach not only to my artwork but to my home, into the way I approach projects, or even when I'm working with clients. Taking those fundamental Old World elements but twisting them and turning them upside down, giving them a new perspective and for people to look at them in a new way."

Living in this apartment was the culmination of putting all build-up inspiration into action, letting his passion be the only guide to what was right or wrong. "It was refreshing because you get to learn a lot about yourself when you leave the outside noise from where you come from and the people that knew you." Just as Milan was fundamental for framing his creative vision, the apartment in Via Savona came to be his very first blank canvas.

# "THROWING YOURSELF OUT THERE IS DAUNTING."

However, turning his passion into a career would not be geometric. Even though he felt like he had something to say, an authentic expression to share with the world, he could not imagine it transforming into his livelihood. "I thought I would just be applying my artistic abilities to an organisation or a publication. Never did I think I could take my work and artistry to a full-time job on my own."

After his six years in Milan, he moved his life back to the United States - to New York City to work as a textile designer. "I loved it, but I was essentially fulfilling someone else's creative vision," and he could not escape the feeling that something was missing. Other jobs after that, too, would seem to bring about that indistinct dissatisfaction. Yet, throwing yourself out there, especially with creativity, is daunting. Not only is there a risk of facing defeat, but you are handing over a piece of yourself for the world to judge. It is the zenith of standing vulnerable in the realm of uncertainty.

But he could not let fear be the narrator of his life; he knew the importance of vulnerability by now. Moving to another country and trusting his instinct when deciding to stay, letting his hunger for a new perspective stand above fear. "Every time I look at a chapter in my life that has gone right, it has always been a chapter where I allowed myself to be vulnerable," so that's what he did - with a little encouragement and questioning as to why he doesn't paint for a living. It was a simple question, but at that moment, it was all he needed: it was a confirmation he was ready. And from one day to another, a fire was lit - enough is enough. And thus, once again, he took a leap of faith.

## HE COULD NOT LET FEAR BE THE NARRATOR OF HIS LIFE.



Now he is standing in his Chicago-based art studio, creating for the remarkable business that he built so rapidly. It boomed and exploded into something bigger than he could have ever expected. But regardless of size and recognition, the binder of his company is the simple philosophy to create for yourself and for those who find beauty in that expression. The juxtaposition of Old World elements and what is just brought to life. A timeless meeting. Elegant layers of patience, a different story unfolding each time you observe.

A story about what it means to envision that blank canvas and making it your own. Whether it is a move, quitting a job that doesn't satisfy you, a piece of art you haven't dared to actualise, an idea that still is just that: an idea. A reminder that you owe it to yourself to take your voice seriously. To listen and not to dismiss it - especially when it feels out of reach.



## ELEGANT LAYERS OF PATIENCE, A DIFFERENT STORY UNFOLDING EACH TIME YOU OBSERVE.





As the familiar rush of creating settles, he turns off the music. The evening is still quiet. His elegant design touch can be seen in the way he dresses, and he remains confident that it was Milan shaping that style too, teaching him the importance of a few versatile pieces that won't go out of fashion. But some things never change. He carries the same smile his friends and family have always known him for, and it would not take long until he one day woke up and decided that he wanted to bring his art to Washington DC, which is where he lives today.



## YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO TAKE YOUR VOICE SERIOUSLY.

With four collection launches per year, he produces between 40-50 pieces, each inspired and united by a theme or palette. Pages from antique books and his geometric artwork joined in his collection *Géométrique*. Inspired by early 20th-century Parisian exposition posters, the collection *l'Exposition* came to life. His art can even arise from 17th, 18th, and 19th century French, Italian and English documents, letters, and engravings, by creating abstract motifs on top of them - his *Bibliothèque* collection. "It's all about taking something old and forgotten and giving it a new life."

Knowing this is not the first, nor the last, he adds the final strokes, then he names the painting *Porta Genova 1930*, and in the bottom right corner, he proudly signs his name - **Josh Young**.

RESEARCH

# SUCTI Toward Internationalisation *for All*

Following the global tendencies, internationalisation is becoming ever more present on campuses across the world. The SUCTI project sheds a light on how internationalisation at home is an effective tool to train the administrative staff, who are a crucial cornerstone in implementing a successful internationalisation strategy in any university.



In our increasingly connected world, internationalisation and globalisation gather momentum by the day. It is an inescapable aspect of modern life that has also established itself as a significant factor in higher education. Within the global community, it is impractical for any university to think of itself in isolation and in a response to the global world, many higher education institutions have identified internationalisation as a way for them to realise their mission more successfully through projects and initiatives that help to create and capture opportunities both across borders and at home.

While traditionally many of these projects focus on student mobility or international conferences for academics, in 2016 the Systemic University Change Towards Internationalisation (SUCTI) project was born at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) in Tarragona, Spain headed by Marina Casals Sala, Director of International Relations at the URV.

### What is SUCTI?

In 2011 during an International Week at the URV, Marina Casals Sala and her team were preparing activities centred around internationalisation for their students, academics, and staff. However, when it came to the administrative staff, they realised that they did not know what to provide. It was the hardest group to cater for. Then, Marina suggested a course to her Vice-Rector and thus, the idea of SUCTI was born - a course at home in the language of the institution, aimed at raising awareness of internationalisation among administrative staff outside international offices.

The founders of SUCTI saw the urgent need to empower not only the students and academics but also the administrative staff, who were often left out of the process when internationalisation became institutionalised, and its core functions were handed over to the international officers. Moreover, the administrative staff often lacked the means or were too bound by daily responsibilities to experience mobility and internationalisation abroad, but they were just as important representatives of internationalisation as the other stakeholder groups.

### The state of the art of internationalisation prior to SUCTI

Findings from a questionnaire sent out to all the universities in the European Association for International Education (EAIE) database in 2017<sup>[1]</sup> revealed that 62.8% or almost two-thirds of the respondents indicated that an internationalisation strategy was in place in their institution and that it was part of the institutional strategy. Yet a further 28.3% indicated that the internationalisation strategy was separate from the institutional strategy. On the other hand, 5% had an institutional strategy that did not consider internationalisation, and 2.2% had neither an institutional nor international strategy. Incidentally, 1.7% of International Directors did not even know if there was a strategy in place or not.

Another key point that emerged from the questionnaire was to establish if there was any in-house training available for the administrative staff in the institutions. 48.3% said that their institution had a general programme for all staff and a further 6.7% said that it was available for some of the staff. 34.4% stated that there was no general training programme as such, but training activities were offered occasionally, and 10.6% said there was no training provided at all.

While most higher education institutions in the questionnaire had a strategy for internationalisation and almost two-thirds of them provided training for all administrative staff, only 27% provide training in internationalisation for all staff, 18.4% for some staff and 12.3% for few staff members. Meanwhile, 40.5% said there is no training for administrative staff in internationalisation.

Universities, despite being places of learning, lacked strategy when it came to fulfilling the mission of learning regarding their own staff and their professional development, especially in the field of internationalisation.

Consequently, the idea of internationalisation at home with SUCTI as its main driving force was a much-needed push for many higher education institutions in the global context.

Realising that the administrative staff is in fact the backbone of any university and that they are often the silent agents of internationalisation, the SUCTI founders aimed to change this perspective and systematically address the administrative staff of universities in the process of internationalisation over a three-year period.



<sup>[1]</sup> Hunter F. ed., 2017. [Online]. SUCTI Report on Training Provision on Internationalisation for Administrative Staff in European Higher Education. [Accessed 23 July 2021]  
Available from: <https://suctiproject.com/outputs/>

## SUCTI objectives

The main objectives of SUCTI were to raise awareness of internationalisation among administrative staff outside international offices and to help institutions enhance management, governance, and innovation capacities for them to become truly international. One of the main starting points of the project was a mapping exercise of institutional knowledge and the identification of training needs.

A trainer remembers that "One of the tasks was to present Università Cattolica and talk about the internationalisation strategy in Cattolica for three minutes using examples of the weather forecast. For example, internationalisation is like a hurricane in our university, or it's a bright sunny day, and then you had to explain why."



Among many other creative tools, the training included undertaking ice-breaking activities, such as choosing an animal you feel like today, or choosing which people you would take with you on a deserted island, such as a doctor, athlete or cook. "This turned out to be an exercise on stereotypes. For example, the doctor turned out to be a Doctor of Law, not a medical practitioner. So, you learnt that there were many things you had not considered before," says the trainer.

The trainers acknowledged that the training had its challenges as well. "It was an adult environment of learning among professionals of universities who came from different organisational units in their universities. When you are a grown-up and you start working, you do not expect to learn in the same way as you were learning back in school or university."

Once the training was done, all the newly trained trainers brought the knowledge back to their home universities and prepared to teach the staff using many of the same tools and activities they had learnt in Poznań.

## Train the Trainers programme

One of the Train the Trainers programmes, where Università Cattolica's trainers along with colleagues of many other European universities were trained, happened during the spring of 2019 in Poznań, Poland. It was an intense week full of training activities.

The training was divided into two different parts - the first part involved teaching the content and how to deliver it, for example, intercultural communication, what does it mean and how it works. The second part of the training was practical and consisted mostly of group work and learning about tools that taught the trainees to deliver the material creatively.

However, perhaps the biggest takeaway for the new trainers was the realisation that there was a completely different way of presenting a topic to the audience than what they had thought of before. Evaluating the methodology they learnt, the trainers consider the engagement of the audience and allowing the audience to move towards the answer and explore the topic deeply, some of the most valuable tools learnt during the week. "Engage the audience, try different methods to engage the audience, it doesn't always have to be 'Raise your hand and speak,' it doesn't always work for everybody."

The trainers remember the programme as a "Breath of fresh air," which gave them insightful methodology on how adults learn and how to engage them. "Instead of imposing internationalisation top-bottom, it is a bottom-up approach. It is crucial to make the people involved feel important, as well as value each one of them. Internationalisation is a mission. It is a trend everywhere."

## Development of the activities

According to the needs and objectives set out at the beginning of the project, SUCTI provided the administrative staff of various universities around Europe, including Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, with knowledge, skills, and tools related to their university's internationalisation process.

The transmission of knowledge happened on two levels. Firstly, the trainers were chosen for the Train the Trainers Programme. These were staff members from the project partner universities, who went to Poznań, Poland, where they got the training. Università Cattolica sent three trainers there. Secondly, once the trainers had been provided with the right methodology, knowledge, tips, and manuals on how to best present the course back home, a three-day-long course was developed, and the newly prepared trainees could go on to train their administrative staff peers at their home universities.

The staff trainers at Università Cattolica recognised the shift in perception that the acquired knowledge applied back home had on the administrative staff regarding internationalisation. "It was an important step towards creating a very successful global community at the university level. What used to be labelled as 'international' was perceived as a matter of the international offices and their activities. We soon discovered that it is not a matter of activities that belong to whom, but a matter of approach to the things that you do in your everyday job." The trainers also emphasise the importance of including all the university staff in the process of internationalisation. "It is important that all the university staff has the chance to be exposed to this training because then the approach that they put in place when they are doing their everyday job can become more international."



The format of the three-day-long course as suggested by the SUCTI Trainers manual and methodology was participatory and interactive as it must be fun for people to learn and finally become change agents for internationalisation. Some of the interactive activities included doing short ice-breakers and playing games, such as cutting up a magazine for images of vehicles (bicycles, cars, yachts, and aeroplanes) and discussing which vehicle best corresponds to the impression they have of the speed of internationalisation at their university. Other activities included inviting experts on certain topics and doing presentations where the listeners could take an active part in asking questions and forming discussions.

The positive impact of the course was undoubtedly felt by the trained administrative staff. Francesco Susca, who works in the Career Management and Student Services office and was one of the administrative staff trained at Università Cattolica. He says, "SUCTI made me realise that my work is useful not only for the domestic students but also for the international students. It helped me understand the needs of the international students, which are different from those of the local students. At my office, I've noticed more commitment to managing the exam schedules to facilitate the international students and their residency here in Italy." In addition, Francesco believes that "SUCTI confirmed my thoughts, and it was comforting - internationalisation should be a concern of every office that deals with international students, not only of the international office. Differences are always a resource and never an issue to be solved."

Meanwhile, Sabrina Cliti, a trainee from Università Cattolica's PR and Media office, recognises the lasting personal impact of SUCTI. "This course opened my mind even more internationally and made me realise how fruitful and exciting it would be making professional experiences and visits abroad as administrative staff," adding that, "It was an experience that pushed me beyond the already known."



### SUCTI impact and outcomes

The impact of SUCTI has reached far and wide. It is work in progress, yet SUCTI has provided some important and tangible outcomes. One of the most substantial first-hand outcomes of SUCTI in Università Cattolica is the synergy among Cattolica International and the other University units. Before SUCTI, Cattolica International was often seen as a virtually separate entity by many of the University staff. Before the training, many of the administrative staff could not relate to what Cattolica International personnel were doing, whereas after the course the purpose of the International Office became much clearer and the cooperation between the various University offices became more successful thanks to the newly acquired understanding of internationalisation and its importance in the wider university context.

Another important change was the initiative to translate the canteen menu into English at Università Cattolica making it much easier and safer for international students to choose a meal to cater for different dietary choices that can be influenced by religion, cultural background or even food allergies. Whereas in Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, Spain a janitor had a practical idea to provide bathroom symbols in Chinese for the large Chinese student community present in the University who due to their completely different background were not able to recognise the typical Western symbols.



**CHEI**  
Centre for Higher Education  
Internationalisation

### CHEI and internationalisation at Università Cattolica

At Università Cattolica, the SUCTI project was conducted under the supervision of the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI) headed by Professor Amanda Murphy. CHEI proudly celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. Additionally, Associate Director at CHEI, Fiona Hunter, was one of the members who conducted the preliminary research on the state of the art of internationalisation in European universities prior to SUCTI.

CHEI, however, has a global - not European - circle of interlocutors, with whom it initiates dialogue and exerts influence in many different areas. CHEI Director Amanda Murphy observes "Internationalisation of higher education is a transversal process, affecting all aspects of higher education - students, professors, academics, and administrative staff. There is nobody untouched by internationalisation."

CHEI promotes and conducts research, training, and policy analysis to strengthen the international dimensions of higher education. In addition to overseeing

international projects at Università Cattolica such as SUCTI, CHEI also provides PhD programmes and Research Training Seminars, which aim to bring up a younger generation of people who are innovative and well prepared to work in the field of international education through transversal training in various areas of research.

As Associate Director Fiona Hunter notes, "Our focus is on professionals who want to combine practical knowledge and enhance their ability to make an impact, to make change happen within their institutions and more broadly in the field through a research contribution."

Perhaps the biggest strength of CHEI is its international pool of talent. As Director Murphy notes "There are very few PhD programmes on internationalisation of higher education, and we attract mature students from all over the world. It is the network of these people working together with renowned international academics on research or training projects that is the strength of CHEI, and is conducive to positive change in universities all over."

### The enduring pay-off of SUCTI

Influenced by the current pandemic and the ever more globalised world many universities are now taking individualised approaches to integrate international elements into their teaching programmes, research, and service deliveries at home. A rising number of technology-supported activities have created new opportunities for the internationalisation of higher education. For example, students can now remain at home while using technology to study with an institution or programme that is simultaneously located abroad such as the CHEI Research Training Seminars.

While the Erasmus+ SUCTI project ended in October 2019, the incentive of the project has not disappeared. That same month SUCTI creators came up with an initiative to offer training to anybody who wanted it, providing two courses a year in the fall and spring. Additionally, learning from the successful experience,

the initiators of SUCTI have taken a step further and launched SUCTI Academia (SUCTIA), a new project that aims to raise awareness among academic staff and shift the internal culture of our institutions towards internationalisation.

"I remember all the meetings with the partners, we became a family. It was wonderful to work together towards an exciting new goal," recalls Marina Casals Sala. The SUCTI family is still growing and the ideas behind it become increasingly appreciated as new projects and initiatives such as SUCTIA take place.

SUCTI has left a legacy of knowledge that is unique in the current world. It helps us to understand and appreciate that internationalisation is for everyone, and each person plays an irreplaceable and important part in it, whether they are students, academics, or administrative staff members.

# Amanda C. Murphy



Amanda C. Murphy (PhD Birmingham) comes from a background of Modern Languages and Applied English and Italian Studies. A full professor of English language and translation at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, in both Milan and Brescia, she became Director of CHEI in 2015. An active promoter of Study Abroad and Exchange at student and faculty level, she has been working since 2015 with the CHEI educational developers on preparing faculty members to teach in the international classroom. Her latest research interests within the field of internationalisation problematise distinctions between English-Medium Instruction as an internationalisation strategy and Englishization, and on innovative models of trans-national education on the African continent. Recent publications include "English-medium Instruction and the Internationalisation of Universities", edited with Hugo Bowles, Palgrave, 2020, 'Collaborating across Continents – the Challenges of Intercontinental Academic Partnerships' in 'EMI and Beyond', edited by Lynn Mastellotto and Renata Zanin, Bolzano University Press, 2020 and, with Beatrice Zuaro, "Internationalisation vs Englishization in Italian higher education: Reframing the issue" in "The Englishization of Higher Education in Europe" (edited by Bob Wilkinson and Renée Gabriels, Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming).

# Fiona Hunter



Fiona Hunter is Associate Director at the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI) at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, Italy and a higher education management consultant working with private, public and faith-based institutions around the world on a broad range of issues. She is also member of the International Advisory Board at the Universidad de Granada in Spain and of the Scientific Council of AVEPRO (Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties), as well as Co-Editor of the Journal of Studies for International Education (JSIE). She is Past President of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), and served for 6 years as member and chair of the Board of Directors for Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE), a non-profit education organisation in the United States. She holds a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in Higher Education Management from the University of Bath in the United Kingdom. She has written extensively on internationalisation and higher education management and has recently co-published "An illustrated guide to managing institutions of higher education".

# Marina Casals Sala



Marina Casals Sala is Director of International Relations at Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, Spain. Marina is a trainer in neuro-linguistic programming and an EAIE trainer, and she has presented at several conferences internationally, both facilitating workshops and giving presentations. As an EAIE active member, she was awarded the Rising Star Award by the EAIE in 2009 in recognition of her contribution to the Association, as well as the Bo Gregersen Award for Best Practice in 2014 as a member of the Green Cockatoo group. Marina was an active member at the EAIE leadership for ten years. Marina is the creator and coordinator of the SUCTI project, which was funded by Erasmus+ and has been recognised with the EAIE President's Award 2019.

STUDENTS

MONDAY  
June  
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# DOWN THE MEMORY LANE

An international journey that many have experienced thanks to Università Cattolica. Memories that will never fade, life-long experiences that will be forever cherished. What aspects of international mobility have remained the same through the years?



# outbound students

What are the main factors that drove you to study abroad/carry out an exchange experience?

I have always liked the idea of exploring a different culture and environment - my mum had been taking me on yearly summer trips to the United Kingdom since I was eleven years old. However, the determining factor that "pushed me over the edge" was my late mentor, Università Cattolica Professor **Federico Stella**, who introduced me to core principles of the American legal system that made me eager to learn more about **American law**. I shared my desire with Professor Stella, who encouraged me to pursue this interest, and put me on the path that would ultimately lead me to study at **Harvard Law School**.

If you could choose ONE word to describe the reason WHY you decided to study abroad which word would it be and why?

adventure

To quote J.R.R. Tolkien, "You step onto the road, and . . . there's no knowing where you might be swept off to." Studying abroad represented **possibility, excitement, discovery, and growth**. All that, I believe, is captured by the word "adventure."

Michele Materni



How would you describe your study/exchange experience?

My study abroad experience was wonderful.

I was exposed to a **brand new world**, to people from more countries than I can remember, to **different and new ways of thinking** that contributed immensely to the person I have become. The level of growth that an exchange experience allows truly is remarkable. I would recommend to anyone who has the opportunity to study abroad to do so without any reservations whatsoever.

If you could choose ONE word to describe your study abroad/exchange experience which word would it be and why?

life-changing

My study abroad programme was the first time I visited the United States, and **I fell in love with the country immediately**. Living there allowed me not only to experience a brand new world but also to significantly improve my English. All this set the foundations that would allow me, a few years later, to undertake a master's degree programme and a **doctoral programme** at **Harvard Law School**, which ultimately led to me to my current position as a litigator at Sullivan & Cromwell in New York City - a place I now call home.

Chiara Giacomuzzi



If you could choose ONE word to describe the reason WHY you decided to carry out this programme which word would it be and why?

thirst

What are the main factors that drove you to study abroad/carry out an exchange experience?

After completing a Master in Piano in 2009 and a Master in Modern Philology with honours in 2011, I started to work as a relief teacher in different schools in the city where I grew up, Brescia. I enjoyed my job, but I felt something was missing from my life experience. Having lived 25 years in Brescia and nowhere else, I felt incomplete.

When Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Brescia, promoted a **scholarship to live and work in Victoria, Australia**, as an **Italian Language Assistant Teacher**, I did not hesitate and I applied immediately. In Brescia, I had volunteered as an Italian Language Assistant with a couple of associations that organise Italian courses and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Therefore, I thought that my thirst for travelling and life experience overseas, my desire to teach the Italian language and culture (which are my true passions) and also my determination to improve my English skills were acceptable reasons to leave my home and my family for nine months in 2012.

Little did I know that after two years I would go back to **Melbourne** to study for the **Diploma of Education (Secondary)** thanks to a scholarship offered by **Rotary Club 2050** and that after nine years I would have settled down in Melbourne.

As mentioned before, after completing my higher tertiary studies, I felt that I still needed to experience something more and explore before settling in. I was thirsty with curiosity about 'what else other than Brescia,' getting out of my comfort zone while still doing something I love. Working in a school in Australia for nine months sounded like the perfect way to satisfy both this deep thirst and my passions at the same time. This programme gave me an **incredible opportunity** and I will always be grateful to Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore for it.

I will always be grateful to Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore for it.



### How would you describe your experience abroad?

My experience was incredible and life-changing. I always tell everyone that 2012 was a starting point of a new chapter of my life because **something clicked inside** me that year.

All Italian assistants were sent to different parts of Victoria, especially Melbourne, to work in a school for nine months. I was sent to a little country town called **Daylesford**, 115 km from Melbourne, with 2500 inhabitants and no train station. My English skills were quite rusty at the time and my personality was shy and reserved.

I worked in the **local secondary school** with two lovely Italian teachers whom I am still in contact with and I consider part of my warm Australian family. I felt welcomed from the beginning and, despite the initial challenges - language barrier, some cultural differences and the lack of independence in terms of transport - after only a few months, **I discovered a new Chiara**. I made countless life-long friends, I grew so much as a teacher, my English skills dramatically improved and I never felt that confident. The local organisation that runs the programme, **Co.As. It.**, was very efficient in supporting all the assistants across Victoria, so **I always felt safe**. The bond that emerged among the assistants was very strong and I am still in regular contact with some of them, even if they no longer live in Australia.

If you could choose ONE word to describe your experience abroad which word would it be and why?

revolutionary

This programme has changed my life and me. The opportunity to live and work abroad in a new context, in my case, a little country town where nobody spoke Italian and where, at the time, my English skills were not extraordinary, forced me to **keep pushing and challenging myself** in ways that I never felt before. This whole experience made me see a new strength within myself and made me realise how much I would have missed out if I had never left Brescia.

Of course, some compromises and sacrifices need (still now) to be made. However, I would **strongly recommend an overseas experience** like the one organised by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore to everyone.

*This whole experience made me see a new strength within myself.*



### What are the main factors that drove you to study abroad/carry out an exchange experience?

Pursuing a degree in **Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures**, a study abroad experience seemed essential for a full understanding of the culture(s) I was specialising in and to perfect my language skills. I was eager to take a deep dive into **American culture**, experience a different teaching and learning style, refine my speaking skills, and **immerse myself** in a **new, stimulating environment**.

Not to mention, a **study abroad experience** is a **life experience**, and a **life-changing** one at that. As someone who grew up as a self-described American wannabe, having the opportunity to study abroad in the **USA** during both my **bachelor's and master's degree** was not only a rewarding experience that contributed to my personal and academic growth, but it also **shaped my career** and elevated my professional profile. Years later, as I answer these questions from my **home office in Washington, DC**, I can attest to how my study abroad experiences led me to where I am today.

If you could choose ONE word to describe the reason WHY you decided to study abroad which word would it be and why?

eagerness

I was eager. Eager to experience what it would be like to live in a country that I had never been to before but had read so much about and whose history and literature was the fabric of my everyday life. Eager to experience the culture, interact with the locals, pick up their accent and **immerse myself in the American way of life**.

### How would you describe your study/exchange experience?

I have had the fortune to participate in **two study abroad programmes** and to undertake an **internship abroad** during my academic career. While all three were amazing opportunities, **the first study abroad experience** is the one that **left the deepest impression**.

My time at the **University of Vermont in 2013** was simply magical. Surrounded by snow-peaked mountains, the college town of Burlington took me in with open arms and immediately felt like home. The campus was something out of a postcard and going to class, even on the most frigid of days (and there were a lot) was always a delight. The hands-on seminar approach to learning encouraged me to **engage with my professors and my peers** and challenged me to become an **active participant** rather than a passive learner. As a result of this experience, I gained a deeper understanding of American culture and made life-long friends from across the world. I will always look back this time fondly.



If you could choose ONE word to describe your study abroad/exchange experience which word would it be and why?

eye-opening

My experiences abroad taught me a lot - about literature, culture, communications, but they also taught me a lot about myself. There's something about being alone in a completely new environment that takes you **out of your comfort zone** and brings out sides of you of which you may not have been aware. It's a **confidence-building exercise** that nurtures a **spirit of independence** and fast tracks **personal growth**. In many ways, my study abroad experiences made me who I am today and gave me the strength, courage and confidence to later pursue a life and career abroad.



# international students

What are the main factors that drove you to study abroad/carry out an exchange experience?

I had the **incredible opportunity** to study abroad in 2009. I visited Italy for the first time in 2006 on a high school trip and knew I wanted to live there the minute I stepped off the plane. I spent the next three years taking shorter trips to different parts of Italy, but nothing felt right for a longer period of time like a semester. I planned to move to Italy after graduation, and I wanted to find a place and a programme that would allow me to master my language skills, meet locals and establish connections to then come back and work. I also did an **internship** which helped me learn about **how a business operates in Italy**. I received far more than I wished for, and I was able to set the ball in motion. I moved to Milan two years later for a **master's at Università Cattolica** and I'm still here 10 years later!

If you could choose ONE word to describe the reason WHY you decided to study abroad which word would it be and why?

expansion

How would you describe your study/exchange experience?

It was completely **life-changing**. I felt right at home as soon as I got there, and I **seized every opportunity** that was presented to me. I didn't want to miss anything! I felt so excited going to my first day of class with Italian students, and **every day felt like an adventure**. I challenged myself to focus on friendships with Italians so that I could **improve my skills** and get to know more about the culture. I am still in touch with some friends I made all these years later, and we reunite here in Milan!



Elena Ciprietti

If you could choose ONE word to describe your study abroad/exchange experience which word would it be and why?

kismet

What are the main factors that drove you to study abroad/carry out an exchange experience?

I had been learning Italian since I was six years old so I would often sit there in class as a little boy dreaming of one day going to live in Italy for a short period. I went on a high school exchange when I was 15 years old for two months in Marsala, Sicily. It was an amazing experience, but I knew deep down I wanted to have a **longer experience** living in Italy. My experience in the South of Italy was incredible, they are some of the friendliest and most hospitable people I had ever met. But I knew this time I wanted a different Italian experience, living in the North. When I found out that **university student exchange** was even possible, I pretty much **changed my whole life plans** to make this happen. I.e., I aimed to do super well in my grades at high school and university just to have this experience. I also had a casual job at McDonald's throughout high school and university to save up enough money to go on **exchange for two semesters**. It was a big sacrifice for me, but I have absolutely zero regrets.

If you could choose ONE word to describe the reason WHY you decided to study abroad which word would it be and why?

passion

I was so passionate about learning the Italian language, Italian culture, and society, I couldn't see myself doing anything else in life, to be honest. It was this passion inside of me to **learn and experience anything and everything about Italy** which compelled me to go on student exchange.

How would you describe your study/exchange experience?

Wow, what an adventure! I saw so many incredible things and **met amazing, interesting, funny people**, with whom some I am still in contact today. We share a **special and unique bond** that nobody or nothing can take away from us. There were of course some **challenging moments** in adjusting to another culture and university system, but I honestly don't remember them. All I remember is the **positive experiences and memories!** I also lived in an all-boys dorm college of Università Cattolica where most of the residents were Italian, so I had the ideal balance of socialising both with Italian and fellow exchange students. I did however take advantage of being centrally based in Milan and **travelled throughout Europe**, even as far as Russia and Turkey. However, the special thing about the experience was not travelling, it was the day-to-day experience of living in Milan, hanging out with friends, going to university. It's something that no amount of tourism can ever give you.

David Paull



If you could choose ONE word to describe your study abroad/exchange experience which word would it be and why?

life-changing

It was **the best and most memorable experience of my life**. It completely changed the trajectory of my life and it still does today. I wouldn't be the person I am today without this experience. I also wouldn't be doing what I do professionally and academically (I work and research the field of international education) if it wasn't for my exchange in Milan. The beautiful thing about the experience was that I didn't just learn about Italian culture, but cultures from all over the world through the friendships I made. For example, my exchange in Milan inspired me to learn Spanish when I returned home, and I've recently learnt Portuguese. From there, I have done further experiences abroad in Latin America and even taught English in Seville, Spain. I have also nearly finished my **PhD on international students from Southern Europe and Latin America**. The origin of this inspiration: my experience in Milan. In short, **I owe this experience everything** and I will continue to treasure these special bonds and memories for eternity.

Nikki & Kyle Rossi



If you could choose ONE word to describe the reason WHY you decided to study abroad which word would it be and why?

N: diversify

I wanted to diversify: my experiences, the people that I was around, the language that I was hearing. Diversifying overall was what I wanted to do with my space.

K: change

I wanted to change my language, I wanted to change the culture, I wanted to change my experiences. I was fortunate enough to live in such an amazing place, I would wake up and I was in the centre of Milan, that's very different to where I grew up – I had that beauty and that culture right at my doorstep.



What are the main factors that drove you to study abroad/carry out an exchange experience?

**N:** It was very unexpected. I went to university not expecting to study abroad but then I picked international studies in my third year and I was required to study abroad. My mum encouraged me to a study abroad semester as opposed to doing a shorter experience (summer programme). I picked Italy so I could take fashion courses and it linked nicely because now my job is in the fashion industry. Cattolica just fit the courses that I wanted to take so that they could count at home.

**K:** I'm fortunate to have an Italian family, as my surname suggests. I had never lived in Italy before, nor had I ever stayed there for such a long period of time but through my course, I learned about the opportunity to study in Milan and I just couldn't turn it down. I had always just been in England so my decision was about experiencing a new culture, learning a new language, living the beauty of the city, making international friends, and above all, about experiencing a change at that time. During my time, I managed to go on holiday and visit friends all over. Overall it was about having a different experience.

How would you describe your study/exchange experience?

**N:** I would say that it was life-changing. I started as a much different person. When it came to interacting with new people, putting myself out into new experiences and opening myself up to everything I was very reserved. I just let life happen to me. But then I decided I was going to do life now which is what Italy brought me and what Università Cattolica brought me and the relationships I made there. Everything in my life changed. I also chose Milan for the connections I had in the fashion industry.

**K:** Other than obviously getting married, it was the best experience of my life. So second best. I made amazing friends for life from this experience and the University was amazing with me. I always look back at those days. We even have Spotify playlists that we listen to wherever we go. The songs remind me of the times that we had aperitivo and enjoyed Milan. Or another time, when we went out to Lake Como for the day and it was beautiful. I just think it was amazing.

If you could choose ONE word to describe your study abroad/exchange experience which word would it be and why?

N: growth

I had never left the country before. I had never lived very far from my family. I had moved a lot in the USA, between different States but that was it. Also, I never had to deal with money by myself before. I was a nanny a few times a week in Milan which opened me up to more than just university life, I was exposed to a different lifestyle. I started my social media profiles a little before I left for Milan, so I started putting myself out there, I started exposing my personal life online. At home, everything was very "secure" whilst studying abroad gave me the chance to be whoever I wanted to be without feeling pressured or judged. I just opened myself up to personal growth and self-confidence.



K: happiness

I spent a whole year just smiling. I was so happy and I think what's nice is that when you go somewhere and you don't know anyone else, you are completely yourself. The friends you make, the time you spend together is pure and natural. I remember just waking up, I was just happy, I had so much time to just be an independent person. What was great was that everyone was happy and there for the same reason. Happiness - it was the happiest year of my life. It changed my life. It was something I had never experienced and I found my whole future from it.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

# INSIDER NEWS

The new QS Rankings results, our Rome campus University hospital achievements and the Academic Year inauguration speech by Ursula von der Leyen are some of our latest news.



### URSULA VON DER LEYEN AT THE ACADEMIC YEAR INAUGURATION

"You are not just the first generation of digital natives, the most connected ones, the most educated generation in our history. You are also showing a great sense of responsibility towards the planet and towards people around you. Since the beginning of the pandemic, young people have truly led by example. And at Università Cattolica, you have put your skills at the service of others, and thanks to professors and staff who have always encouraged solidarity and volunteering. So I simply want to say: Thank you. Thank you for setting the example and for urging us to aim higher. The future of Europe is in good hands. Now I would like Europe to give something back to you. I believe Europe must work first and foremost for the next generation. Voglio un'Europa al servizio dei giovani".

These are the words Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, addressed to the students, professors and staff filling the Aula Magna at Università Cattolica Milan campus for the AY 2021/2022 inauguration.

### UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

The QS World University Rankings by Subject 2022 was published on April 6, 2022. Università Cattolica placed 16 subjects (+2 compared to 2022) among the top 300 in the world or higher: Classic & Ancient History (50), Nursing (51-100), Theology (101-130), Agriculture & Forestry, Philosophy, Modern Languages, Psychology, and Law (101-150); Communication & Media Studies, Economics & Econometrics, Medicine (151-200); Accounting & Finance, Linguistics, Sociology (201-250); Business & Management Studies, Education (251-300).



### THE GEMELLI HOSPITAL RANKED #1 IN ITALY AND #37 IN THE WORLD

Università Cattolica Agostino Gemelli University Hospital is the best hospital in Italy and #37 worldwide based on the World's Best Hospital 2022 Ranking by Newsweek. The renowned magazine publishes the ranking each year in collaboration with Statista Inc. The ranking analyses 2,000 hospitals across 25 countries and it takes into consideration the excellence for patient treatments, the number of well-known doctors, the quality of its nursing staff and the availability of innovative technologies.

# WORLD BOUND



No. 7

### CONTRIBUTORS

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MyCattolica



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Dear Colleague & Friends,

Meet us at the upcoming Forum EMEA Conference in Milan Italy held at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore next October. Join us for a dialogue that reimagines the landscape of international education in a way that enables real change.

We look forward to meeting you!

**Cattolica International**