

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC) is the most prestigious university in Chile, alongside its secular counterpart, Universidad de Chile, both of which are highly selective. Both QS World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education Rankings have in various years ranked UC at the top of Latin American institutions. As one dean put it, “We are one of the oldest and most traditional universities in the country and without a doubt one of the best in most of our degree programs.” The university has eighteen faculties (schools) spread across four campuses in the capital city of Santiago, and one campus in Villarrica, a city in southern Chile primarily known for tourism, farming, and forestry. UC is one of about sixty private and public universities in Chile and often described as privately owned and publicly subsidized. As a Catholic institution, it is private, but benefits from national funding contributions that make up about a fifth of its operating budget. While the university is well regarded for the caliber of its academics, it also has developed a strong reputation for its commitment to service, community engagement, and public impact through research.

UC serves approximately 35,000 students, 29,000 of which are undergraduates and 1,000 international students. Its admissions process is based on high school grades and scoring on the Prueba de Selección Universitaria (PSU), a national standardized test that students must take to attend the most academically elite institutions in Chile (OECD, 2013). According to one senior administrator, UC enrolls a majority of students who score in the top quartile of the PSU. While this national system is viewed by some as fair – “a blind selection” – it also tends to favor students from privileged backgrounds. In an effort to increase the inclusivity of their admissions, in recent years the university has

instituted a supplemental admissions program that takes a more holistic view of applicants, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. Yet the university continues to draw over half (54 percent) of its students from the “paid private” sector of secondary schooling (Vásquez et al., 2023).

UC has approximately 3,800 faculty, about half of whom are full time. Until relatively recently, UC was something of an enclosed academic ecosystem, producing much of its own talent. This was partly a legacy of the Pinochet era when international cooperation was restricted (Austin, 1997). As one long-term member of the administration explained, fifteen or twenty years ago most UC faculty and senior administrators were UC alumni. However, today faculty are recruited through an open call, and about 10 percent of faculty are international. Prospective faculty are evaluated carefully through a process of competitive examination, and there are many applications for any advertised post. Administrators and faculty describe UC’s structure as “horizontal” or “flat,” with deans elected by the faculty of their respective schools. Administrators and faculty also note that students have a strong voice in decision-making through student government. The UC student body president sits on the University’s Leadership Council, which consists of senior administrators, faculty, and staff representatives. The Leadership Council is the highest governing body that shapes university policies.

Chile’s higher education financing has been a politically contested policy domain since the 1980s, when the military junta introduced market-oriented user pay policies. By 2011 the resulting high tuition costs provoked sustained and effective student opposition, which led to the creation of a complex “free system.” With the aim of assisting low- and middle-income families and individuals, the *gratuidad* program covered all public institutions and was open to private universities that met certain requirements (Delisle & Bernasconi, 2018). By 2020 the scheme subsidized the participation of children from families in the bottom 60 percent of household incomes. For UC the financial situation is still complex, with about 60 percent of the annual operating budget coming from tuition and 20 percent from the State. Endowment and donations are modest and variable but still make up about 5 percent of annual income.

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

The Republic of Chile lies on the west coast of South America and is the southernmost country in the world. Spain colonized the region in the mid

sixteenth century, and the region was under Spanish control for almost three centuries. In 1818 Chile declared independence and by 1830 established a stable authoritarian government that extended its territories into lands occupied by Peru and Bolivia. In 1888, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile was founded as a pontifical university by the Vatican. The Vatican established pontifical universities to ensure the preparation of individuals trained in theology, philosophy, and canon law. As one senior administrator explained, “The university was born from the heart of the Church to create a university not only with a Catholic identity, but one that could also contribute to building society – and always in contrast to the secular universities.” UC’s titular head, the chancellor, has often been the bishop of Santiago. In its early years, UC was highly dependent on the Catholic Church. The first of its eleven rectors (presidents) were priests or individuals with very close ties to the Church. The Vatican continues to have a substantial say over the selection of the rector. Although no longer a practice, many of those working at the institution today remember a time when leaders (e.g., rectors, deans) were expected to be practicing Catholics.

In its early years, UC focused on providing an outstanding professional education informed by Catholic values. These values emphasized a humanitarian approach to learning with the ultimate aim of serving society. In short, the university aimed to prepare graduates to enter professional and public roles as well-trained, committed, and ethical leaders. The twentieth century saw the emergence and growth of democratization in Chile. However, the 1960s and early 1970s were a time of intense political polarization and social unrest. UC responded to calls by students and faculty to become more actively engaged in addressing some of the pressing challenges facing society – issues of poverty and equity, along with concerns about the intense political divides in the country. In 1973, a coup d’état led to the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, a regime that left thousands of alleged dissidents and political enemies dead or missing and quashed all dissident political activity. A referendum in 1988 eventually ended that regime, and a center-left coalition led the country through the early part of the twenty-first century.

One outcome of the coup was the appointment of UC’s first lay rector, Jorge Swett, a philosopher and an ardent Catholic. This was the beginning of a series of lay leaders of UC. Although each president has been Catholic, the stated position of this new generation of institutional leaders has been that people of all faiths are welcome at the university. As one senior administrator explained, “the [current] president says often in speeches ‘here we are open to the believer and the non-believer alike, with the same love and in the same

way.” While the institution was once predominantly populated by Catholics, today there are a significant number of people of other faiths who work and study at the institution. That said, new senior administrators and faculty are expected to attend institutional events, including religious ceremonies, and to respect the Catholic faith.

During the 1980s, UC experienced significant growth, including the opening of a school of engineering. It was also a time when UC began to struggle over what one longtime senior administrator called its “dual nature” – the transition from a primarily teaching-focused institution to one that increasingly focused on impactful research. This evolution involved significant long-term strategic investments, including sending faculty members abroad to secure doctorates at well-regarded research universities in the US, Canada, and other countries. While this was an exciting time, it was also a challenging time. The university asked the leadership of each school to chart its own course and find its way forward. As one dean explained, “each had to work things out and scrape with their own nails.”

From 2000 to 2010, under the rectorship of Pedro Pablo Rosso, the university began a series of reforms. These included the development of a general education plan requiring students to take courses outside their own school in the university to encourage greater interdisciplinary understanding. In 2000 university leadership decided that all schools should have PhD programs and also should emphasize UC as an institution with global reach, seeking partnerships across the region and the world. Rosso also focused on the “third mission” of higher education: social engagement through innovative research and other publicly engaged activities. The university had a long tradition of outreach and extension, and under Rosso, it continued to amplify and deepen this commitment to serving the public. As one faculty member explained, “We are global pioneers in terms of the third mission – this [emphasis] has been there for over a century now.”

UC'S CONTEMPORARY MISSION

Today UC can best be described as a large private research university with a social and public mission. One professor described, “We have three great aspects to our mission – education, research and engagement with society.” Many see the university’s work as serving the country as well as the Catholic Church and view these twin goals as inextricably linked. As one dean said, “Our mission is to serve the country’s development – to foster knowledge and

to train professionals and to do this supported by the Christian ideal of what integrity is, what it is to be human.” A UC director explaining Catholic identity noted, “[it] means to serve – working for others, our fellow human beings. But being a Catholic *university* also means communicating reality through science from the position of reasoning, as well as informed by faith.”

This faith-based aspect of the work is an important element. The director further reflected, “The world is in a peak moment with regards to science. But something is missing. People are feeling a great uneasiness. I believe this university can help them understand and express the truth from both sides, reason, and faith.” However, for some, the Catholicity of the university is a less salient feature of the institution. As one faculty member noted, “The Catholic mission is a very undefined element of the equation . . . Our rector [Ignacio Sánchez Díaz] says, ‘Being excellent is what makes us Catholic,’ which is not a very satisfying response in terms of faith.” UC embraces the need to serve society, but as one professor observed, “the discussions about service really don’t get connected to Catholicity.”

A key means of fulfilling the mission has been the education of UC’s students. UC prepares them to be well-trained, committed, and ethical professionals and practitioners in their respective fields – graduates prepared for lives of meaningful service to society. At the same time, in recent decades the institution has increasingly sought to broaden its impact through the pursuit of knowledge through research. It is an ideal embraced by many faculty members. An administrator shared, “I see a commitment to this mission in my conversations with professors I work with all the time. We don’t do research just for the sake of research, or teaching for the sake of teaching, there is a transcendent purpose.” UC’s conception of engagement and service has a pragmatic bent. As one faculty member put it, “You can see how the University’s research can solve problems in industry, in society, and how we can materialize [some of] these solutions into products.” Indeed, for four of the past five years, UC has had the highest number of patents of any university in Chile. This desire to address Chile’s (and by extension the wider world’s) pressing problems is now an institutional value – articulated in the institution’s mission, strategic plan, and consistently underscored by the university’s leadership. A faculty member who has worked at UC for three decades said, “While engagement has always been a stated aspect of our mission, it is one thing to say it and another thing to manifest it concretely. In my time here I feel UC has grown and improved when it comes to doing concrete things to achieve that. I feel that today, it is not just lip service. It is true.”

Aligning the work of the university to this mission is central to the institution's 2020–2025 Development Plan, which points to ten significant areas of action: Catholic identity, UC community, university governance, academic innovation, research, internationalization, expanding opportunities, digital transformation, commitment to society, and institutional management (Bolumburu, 2021). President Ignacio Sánchez Díaz notes:

The University's identity is a permanent challenge that must prioritize constructing a new development plan. We are a university community with a Catholic identity, inclusive and welcoming, open to believers and non-believers, deeply rooted and committed to society . . . Based on our principles and values, the challenge is to deliver a substantive and original contribution to the country in the area of scientific, social, cultural, economic, and artistic fields, among others.

The “challenge” lies in reconciling a desire to develop impactful, world-class research in areas of social sciences, humanities, and the STEM fields while also honoring the centrality of teaching. It also must balance these aims with its faith-based mission to serve society and touch the lives of individuals in the community, which takes precedence over the pursuit of grant dollars or numbers of peer-reviewed publications in top-tier international disciplinary journals.

An evolving aspect of UC's mission is its greater emphasis on international activities – having an impact not just in Chile but also in South America and beyond. There is a desire for UC to become a more “international” university. This is beginning to be reflected in its faculty recruitment, which has drawn in colleagues from other countries. Some of these efforts are inward-facing and aimed at rethinking what it means to create a supportive and inclusive community. A major emphasis over the past few years has been promoting equity and inclusion. This means working to advance gender equity and creating a more supportive environment for campus members from LGBTQ + identities and underrepresented racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. One of the levers for these efforts at the student level is admissions. While the system historically relied on ranking students by high school grades and the PSU, its supplemental and holistic admissions program for applicants from underserved areas has helped broaden access from some students. Some schools within the university have their own efforts aimed at diversifying their student bodies. For example, the proportion of women in engineering has risen from 17 percent in 2000 to 34 percent today. To support students from diverse backgrounds after admission, UC also instituted a special

program, La UC Dialoga. A key part of this program is a quarterly meeting where students, administrators, and faculty gather for roundtable discussions about what can be done to create a better community. Discussions touch on practices to foster greater civility and what can be done to call out and stop situations where individuals with less power (e.g., students or staff members) are being disrespected. One outgrowth of these efforts has been the creation of an ombuds office and a clear process that campus members can use to report incidents of abuse or harassment.

The university has also made concerted efforts to strengthen its connection with the external community. The Chilean government often turns to UC when attempting to address important societal issues. UC's Public Policy Center draws together faculty from across campus to respond to critical social issues. UC faculty complete research aimed not simply at diagnosing challenges but working with community partners to propose a way forward. The university also has established and maintains various resources for communities across Chile. For example, UC's Ancora Centers are a network of family health clinics modeling best practices in community healthcare. Another initiative, Biblioteca Escolar Futuro, creates mobile libraries for various communities, including incarcerated women. Each mobile library has between 1,500 and 2,000 books and is supported by all of UC's disciplinary schools. UC has also organized crisis response teams during times of emergency. When floods in Chañaral in northern Chile nearly destroyed the entire city in 2015, UC sent teams of volunteers to help, including engineers and other experts, in water, hydraulics, and geography. As one dean recalled:

We were one of the first ones to be there, free of charge, and no one knows about it because we don't need them to know. But there we were there, with the president, vice president, deans – all wearing gloves, muddy boots, shoveling mud out of houses, listening to families tell us how the mud flow had taken their relatives.

At the university, donations were collected as well. The event powerfully demonstrated UC's commitment to service and to Chile. Such efforts also have an instrumental value satisfying UC's accrediting body's requirement of "linkages to the community."

There are also efforts to develop internal capacity for community-engaged work. The Bridges Program aims to provide extensive training to the various faculties at UC on service learning, a pedagogy that integrates community-based experiences into the curriculum. Globally, since the 1990s, service

learning has been a curricular model for promoting civic engagement at universities. It entails building university partnerships with community-based organizations. By tackling real-world issues as part of curricular learning, students develop disciplinary knowledge and community-based knowledge and support community partners in addressing those issues most important to the community. At their best, these efforts are reciprocal – they draw on the expertise of universities and communities to address and make progress on important social challenges. Even in research, Rector Sánchez has been a strong advocate for community-engaged work for all faculty and the importance of making research publicly accessible: “I always say that if you take a research project, like from the agency which is the equivalent of the NIH, along with your scholarly work on that project, you should write a column in the newspaper telling the story to a twelve-year-old person, telling them what you are doing with the public money that is funding your research.” Such activity makes transparent how public money is being spent. It also shows the impact the university is having on society and can benefit public perception and interest in UC. As the rector explained, “That column is going to be read by parents who are going to tell that twelve-year-old child ‘You have to go to this university!’”

Community-based work with primary and secondary schools has been an ongoing effort at UC for the past twenty years. However, as one faculty member noted, two decades ago the relationships tended to be “very one sided . . . We went to the schools, asked them for space and sent our students and often the reward for the school was small.” More recent efforts have involved collaborating closely with schools and teachers to create mutually beneficial efforts. Commenting on the future of this work, the dean of education estimated that of the 100 sites currently involved in education partnership, a full half are robust partnerships. The goal is for this percentage to expand dramatically over the next few years. She noted, “We are currently exploring developing more formal contracts and even, in some cases, making people at the schools staff of the University.” A formal alliance with several local school districts called Servicio Local seeks to deepen this relationship. One faculty leader explained, “We are going to do research *with* the schools, not *to* the schools. We are developing the agenda for this alliance and an agreement has been signed by the rector, [and] the dean of education. The director for the Center for Educational Policy and Practice will head the operation and coordinate the alliance.” It is an exemplar of community-engaged partnering, and such conversations are beginning to occur in several of UC’s schools. One faculty member explained, “Many [faculty] feel this

work is very, very important and those conversations about why this work is relevant have been happening.” Such shared understandings will be an important way for UC to further institutionalize its commitment to this work.

WEAVING UC'S COMMITMENT TO ENGAGEMENT INTO THE INSTITUTIONAL FABRIC

While these sorts of initiatives give life to UC's mission to serve the people of Chile and the Catholic Church, such efforts may well prove ephemeral if they are not firmly anchored in the institutional culture. What is clear from speaking with administrators and faculty at UC is a shared sense of purpose and commitment to the institution's mission. The director of UC's Public Policy Center said, “We are super clear regarding where we are headed – our purpose. Conversations at Católica begin with ‘This is why we exist’ and ‘This is the purpose of University.’ This is typical of UC culture.” One of the deans explained his school's work by saying, “It involves addressing and anticipating society's problems so we can deliver services – water, transportation, whatever – and it means caring for the person as well.” Noting the university's humanistic mission, he went on, “We need to be mindful of the effects humans are having on our environment, on other people, the marginalization of society and those outside the system. I find that message to be very powerful, very good, and very unique.”

One of the shared values at UC is a deep commitment to “excellence” in all things. It is a mark the university seeks to imprint on its graduates. One dean explained:

We call this the UC seal. Students sometimes ask, “What do people mean by that?” Then they graduate and come back and say “Now I know what the UC seal is! It's crazy, but it's true, we are alike!” How? We are more strict, more goal oriented – we are deep in the thought process but then need to put that into concrete actions and projects.

Using knowledge to address societal problems is fundamental to how UC members understand their purpose and work. The dean continued, “Nowadays for any academic in our university, any dean, to consider an idea without an end is unconceivable. I believe our students inherit that understanding and way to be a professional.” A faculty member noted how this influences faculty relationships with external partners as well: “This ‘seal’ of

excellence is very ingrained . . . We interact a lot with public services, with municipalities, and they say, ‘This is Católica, it must be well done.’ And it challenges you – it sets a goal to do it right.” This desire to make a difference in the world is widely held at the institution alongside a desire to continually improve. A senior academic administrator noted, “I feel a central element to the University is that we are always working at it, looking at it, and thinking about how to do [this work] in an ever-changing society in which Catholic principles are not necessarily valued.” As one dean reflected, this striving to be better also shows up in UC’s approach to the curriculum: “I believe the education process itself requires constant revision of how people are educated. Our curricular structure requires constant updating.”

Although UC, like any university, has hierarchical structures, there is a shared commitment to fostering mutual respect among students, staff, faculty, and the administration. One aspect of this is promoting transparency. A dean remarked, “When a student asks for an appointment with me, you accept it. That doesn’t happen at all universities.” Many noted the importance of Rector Sánchez and his senior administrative team in setting a tone of openness and concern for the individual. The rector visits each of the eighteen schools every year and meets with auditoriums full of faculty and students and gives them an update on the university and answers questions. One senior colleague remarked, “They can ask him anything. That is not usual, and this president does it.” Others recalled that during his first visit Rector Sánchez made a point of meeting a wide range of people and on the second visit was already calling people by name. One colleague said, “These are not minor things, to feel seen, to feel valued at work. This is a president who is interested in knowing what your title is and what you do and what you contribute to the institution.” This concern for community has also shaped the culture of individual schools. The dean of the engineering school said:

I talk about a culture of care . . . I don’t know of any other engineering schools in the world whose strategic focus for the next few years is the issue of care – and care not as a theory, care as what happens in the classroom, in how we relate to students, in creating safe spaces for them, in how we interact with professionals. History sees engineering as an area that favors the right side of the brain, but we are interested in connecting the right and left side of the brain. I think that makes the University’s project unique.

Summing up his experience, one senior administrator said, “There is a high level of commitment to community here.” A faculty colleague described UC

as “a very human institution. A place where you can be original, can be yourself, and are known and valued at different levels of the University.”

These values inform the governance processes as well. Overall people characterize the governance system as inclusive. One dean described it as “much more democratic and open today.” Another noted that the longevity of UC’s rectors and “the stability of our governance system has helped us maintain our mission” further fostered by the ability of the key constituents to work well together. A faculty member deeply involved in community-based work described UC as having “distributed leadership” and pointed to numerous initiatives, projects, and centers that were the result of people realizing their own ideas in the institutional context. She concluded, “There is a very open space for intermediate leadership here.” Further, there is a deep commitment by the constituents to work together and resolve conflict productively. One faculty member shared, “Católica is a very peaceful place, not in the sense that it doesn’t have tensions or conflicts, but it tends to solve them in a way that they don’t become public. If you had a complaint, you would never say that publicly. You’d go through the University channels to get it resolved.”

A shared commitment to excellence, serving Chile, and fulfilling the Catholic mission of service to society informs faculty life at UC. As one administrative member put it, “People are not here just because of a paycheck. The level of commitment, sacrifice, of effort that people here give goes way beyond what they are required to do.” During the hiring process, prospective faculty know that their primary activities will be teaching and research. The rector appoints two faculty members for each search from outside the discipline or field. These individuals are asked to ensure that a candidate hired does not only show competence or promise as a teacher and researcher but should demonstrate a public commitment to society, along with evidence that the research they are pursuing is transferable, innovative, and entrepreneurial. In short, they must demonstrate impact beyond their academic discipline.

Once hired, new faculty must complete 100 hours of teacher training. As one senior administrator explained, “This sends a super clear message compared to those of us who started twenty or more years ago – teaching is important.” The ideal of “excellence” is also underscored as new faculty join UC. One faculty director shared that when briefing new faculty colleagues, “I try to explain about our desire for excellence. We have to keep up with the latest technologies and the latest research.” The director also underscores the importance of contributing to a healthy institutional and academic culture at

UC: “I explain that our work environment is very good, and we need them to keep it that way.” Many see UC’s mission and its commitment to being a vibrant, supportive academic community as having a positive effect on their recruiting efforts. A senior academic administrator explained, “People are happy to work here and it’s clear when open positions are posted. We get a lot of applicants and not necessarily because we pay very well but because they know it is an institution in which they feel like they are contributing.” It is an approach that seems to be working.

UC GOING FORWARD: ONGOING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

UC’s mission – its desire to serve Chile, the Church, and broader humanity by seeking new knowledge and solving pressing real-world problems – resonates powerfully with the people who work there. However, the institution faces a significant set of challenges and tensions as it continues its work. First, navigating the dictates of any particular faith can be challenging, especially with an increasingly diverse academic community that embraces democratic values and freedom of inquiry. For example, when hiring faculty, should Catholic identity trump teaching or research excellence, or vice versa? Not all the teachings of the Catholic Church are embraced by the people who work there. The university has in recent years emphasized inclusion and acceptance of individuals with different faiths; however, for some campus members, UC’s Catholic identity is the bedrock of the institution, ensuring institutional continuity and connection with long-held values. This latter set sees UC’s Catholicism as protecting it from volatile and sometimes temporary societal shifts and believes that if that makes UC seem “traditional” at times, so be it. As one faculty member put it, “Personally, I would not want the University’s ownership transferred to the professors.” While campus members feel current leadership has succeeded in striking a balance between Catholic tradition and more progressive, inclusive practice, this continues to be challenging. As one dean explained, “Having a leadership that can communicate with the Catholic church but also be responsive to the demands of a country without affecting those communications is very difficult.”

In a similar way, UC’s deep commitment to serving Chile is distinct from its more recent vision of becoming an international university. Drawing in more faculty members from other countries and increasing collaborations with academics from across South America and the world raises the possibility of detracting from in-country activities and impact.

While UC has clearly made the issue of equity and inclusion a priority, there is still progress to be made. As UC has experienced remarkable growth over the past several decades, it has grown into a complex organization with eighteen schools. As one senior administrator noted, “I have heard this from many people – there are way too many schools. The results are too many segregated groups and if we want to talk about interdisciplinary issues, then the best way to accomplish this is to reduce them . . . The result would be fewer departments but more University – the collective building of knowledge from different disciplines, different areas.” The inevitable presence of hierarchy at the university is another factor that rests in tension with the desire to foster an inclusive community. While faculty and students feel they have a voice, as one dean explained, “There are still big hierarchies in universities. The professional staff see the professors as ‘above’ them. The students feel professors are at another level. This can cause fear in a relationship.” The institution also needs to diversify its leadership. Currently, only one of UC’s eighteen schools is led by a woman, with deanships elected positions. As one dean noted, “Schools keep voting for men rather than women. We need a culture change, and it is a huge challenge.” The institution’s student body has become somewhat more diverse, with approximately 15 percent of students admitted through more holistic admissions criteria. However, there is still much work to be done before UC has truly broadened the socioeconomic background of its students. One senior academic leader said, “We need to keep pushing the mechanisms of inclusive admissions.” The numbers of undergraduates admitted through the various “equity channels” increased in 2022 by increasing support for students with disabilities through UC’s Department of Inclusion (Sánchez Díaz, 2023). Diversifying student admissions and increasing need-based scholarships are part of the answer.

Another key issue UC will have to address is moving beyond its current tuition-dependent system. Supporting a socioeconomically diverse student body will require a great deal of financial aid. Pursuing major, publicly engaged research projects also requires major grant funds. Currently State support is modest, comprising less than 25 percent of UC’s operating budget, and the university’s endowment is small for an institution of this size and degree of impact. In 2022 the endowment reached USD43 million; while annual giving from alumni and corporations has begun, it is still in its infancy. The situation also creates a dynamic that could lead to a more market-based or consumerist mentality. That is, if the students are the ones paying for the education, the institution needs to give them what they want in return. Whether these forces have the capacity to distort UC’s mission is unclear.

UC also faces challenges as it seeks to promote community engagement in the heart of its work. Community-engaged scholarship involves collective problem-solving in the spirit of mutually beneficial partnerships. The kinds of outputs a community may need do not always translate into the products accepted by the academy (e.g., publications in top journals, grant monies). This produces tension for faculty; they want to be a part of collaborative problem-solving and making a difference, but the outcomes their community partners need may not square with traditional markers of success for an academic. As one faculty member in the social sciences explained, “My colleagues who are heavily invested in research don’t value community engagement and they don’t do [this kind of work]. So, it’s others doing it – adjunct faculty, faculty who basically only teach.” Community-engaged scholarship requires a different approach than the technocratic stance that tends to be embraced by universities – one where they assume “we” (faculty and the university) have the expertise and the answers. As one dean explained, when community-engaged scholarship is done right, “we (faculty) need to understand the importance of being vulnerable and being willing to acknowledge we don’t know it all, saying, ‘I will contribute with this but please help me with this other one because I have no clue.’” It is an approach towards knowledge production and problem-solving that runs counter to many of the predominant norms of the academy. It was well described by the dean of education who said UC intended to do “research *with* the schools, not to the schools.” But for many faculty members, this is a challenge. As one faculty member involved in such work noted, “There is a strong commitment from teachers from professors to respond to the demands and needs of the country. It’s something that moves them – both older professors and a lot of younger professors. But many times, they feel frustrated when what they want to do in this field does not have a big enough space in their academic career.” Addressing these issues will require UC to take a hard look at how it rewards and promotes its faculty and perhaps even how it defines the role of faculty members.

One of the most powerful ways of understanding the priorities of an institution is to understand how it defines success. Despite these ongoing challenges, campus members take great pride in the historic and ongoing successes of UC’s scholarly and societal contributions. People feel the university has a clear purpose, and as campus members, they are able to contribute to this larger work and make a difference in Chile and the world. There is a powerful internal narrative of success that encourages people at UC. This narrative is buttressed by external validation. UC is frequently in the news regarding its

various community-engaged efforts. People take great pride that when there is a crisis – an earthquake, flood, or the pandemic – UC plays a prominent role in responding.

UC continues to do exceptionally well in national and regional rankings. For the past five years, UC has been ranked at the top of institutions in South America. While university members are proud of this recognition, those we interviewed were keen to explain this as simply an outgrowth of the good work being done that emanates from its mission. As one faculty member explained, “In the president’s reports I have never heard ‘According to the rankings we are’ . . .” While UC could well be seen as a “world-class university,” it is defining and pursuing success on its own terms. Through its focus on pragmatic and relevant research, it has managed to navigate the tensions some institutions face between rewarding teaching and rewarding research, between serving the needs of the community while also conducting research that resonates worldwide.