

Public presentation of Francesc Torres, rector of the UPC since 12 December 2017

Inaugural address. 10 January 2018

Secretary for Universities and Research, general directors for Universities and Research, rectors, authorities, members of the university community, business representatives, colleagues, friends and family, it gives me and the team I lead great pleasure for you to be here today, at the inauguration of the mandate of the new Executive Council of the UPC. This ceremony is the result of a democratic electoral process that is repeated every four years, so I must start by thanking all the members of the UPC community who have placed their trust in us and in our government proposals. We can assure you that we accept the assignment with enthusiasm, rigour, dedication and, above all, the will to combine forces in a university to which each and every one of us contributes.

Allow me, first of all, in my name and on behalf of my team, to thank the outgoing rector, Enric Fossas, his Executive Council and his discretionary staff for their dedication to the UPC and the good work that has been done during a mandate that has taken place in a difficult economic and political context. I also wish to thank them for their cooperation and the great willingness they have shown in making the transfer exemplary, which has undoubtedly benefited our university.

We begin our term in office in the belief, which is shared with many of you, that debating and reflecting on where we are and where we want to go are vital for the future of the UPC. Open criticism and public, honest and honourable comparison of ideas and proposals fuel our efforts and must be deeply rooted in a public institution such as ours, which is open, equitable and vital for the progress and well-being of the country.

When I was visiting the various campuses and schools during my campaign, I was impressed by the great energy I found, the enormous talent and initiative I saw, and the conviction and tenacity with which the university community has pushed academic, research and technology transfer projects forward, despite the difficulties and restrictions that we have endured in the last few years (and continue to endure). I was also impressed by the need, which you have transmitted to me, to have faith in the future and to believe that what you do is important for the institution and for society, and that because of this you need to feel that you are supported by the University and to receive the recognition you deserve. The University is made by the conjunction of all our efforts: as staff and as students we must feel that we are an indispensable part of the University's projects. To go forward, we need to place our trust in every person, unit and service. UPC staff are the keepers of an enormous wealth of talent and experience that must be mobilised by creating a setting that is characterised by co-responsibility and autonomy and that engages people. Those of us who have responsibilities will have to make decisions, but in doing so we must take into account the experience and knowledge of the people in our teams, particularly by listening to those who are on the front line. Understanding and resolving the problems of those who serve final users directly is the path to efficiency and, above all, to a better coexistence.

It must be said, however, that to fulfil the functions that have been assigned to us, the University must have sufficient staff and an influx of younger employees in a setting that encourages professional and personal growth. We are all responsible for that.

Over the course of my personal career, I have had the good fortune to be involved in various aspects of academic and professional life. I have always followed the same recipe: to be optimistic and dedicated, to look forward, to believe in my colleagues, to be honest and to share success and learn from failure. Ultimately, what determines what we do and what we are is very simple. In my case, it is the conviction that improving our own existence inevitably involves improving the life of those around us. Only with others can we progress and enjoy

fully. The fractal structure of institutions, of society itself, is reflected in the fact that these principles grow in scope as we take on more responsibility.

I lead a team that shares and wants to share these values, a team with experience and conviction, with diverse backgrounds and outlooks, who are keen to listen, who are committed to the progress of Catalonia, who want to push forward an academic project that involves us all, so that we can face the great challenges ahead with ambition and as a team. Universities cannot turn their backs on society and today, more than ever, we must insist that the various political forces and the rulers avoid being tempted by confrontation and that they embark on the path of dialogue and consensus in searching for political solutions that respond to the concerns of citizens.

We want to make a clear commitment to research, innovation and technology transfer. The uniqueness of the UPC lies in its polytechnic nature, which places us at the forefront in producing graduates who access the labour market more quickly and therefore have a greater impact on the economy. Architecture, engineering, science and technology are the driving forces behind the growth of society in the 21st century, in which there is an increasing need for professionals who have interdisciplinary backgrounds and are able to think strategically. These are the traits that are characteristic of the UPC and set it apart from other universities. In addition to up-to-date, top-quality teaching, these traits are defining features that must ensure that we are seen as essential actors in the country's progress.

We believe that effective promotion of research, technology transfer and teaching is even more effective when we recognise our diversity, which is rooted in the values of the 'federalist' history of the UPC. Our thematic, disciplinary and territorial diversity gives us breadth, robustness and flexibility. Innovation, which lies at the very heart of the UPC, requires diverse settings and appropriate ecosystems that foster creativity and initiative. Each area, each unit lends its own character to its staff and students. The schools bring purpose, which stays with students throughout their careers, creates a bond and gives them a sense of belonging. This character is transmitted to our graduates through quality teaching that is imbued with impressive research and technology transfer, is sensitive to regional concerns but is also open and prominently featured on the international scene. The social commitment and sustainability of our policies is also a constant.

Today more than ever, we must remind ourselves that it is the students who make this university, because there would of course be no university without them. In an increasingly competitive and demanding environment, we must bear in mind that it is students who have chosen to invest time, effort and money in us. We must strengthen the skills that enable them to receive an education of the highest quality, that stimulates their critical and entrepreneurial spirit and transmits ethical and social values. It is vital that they feel welcome, that they get the full benefit of participation in university life and the University's services, that they are thrilled to graduate and, above all, that in their professional lives they feel rewarded for having chosen the UPC. Our students are our best ambassadors.

To conclude, I would like to point out that all Catalan public universities have carried out a remarkable social, cultural and economic function in the past decades that has placed us in leading positions at the national and international levels. A modern, advanced society cannot be conceived of without a strong public university system that is committed to the progress of the country and its citizens. I wish to re-emphasize our commitment to seeking consensus and combined action with other public universities and the public administration to face the challenges ahead of us, which are more than a few: funding, the degree map, fees, infrastructure, new staff, etc. We will also seek the involvement of local society and its industrial and business fabric to reinforce our commitment to regional development and the well-being of citizens.

They say that the future is written by those who are clear about what they want, who believe in what they do and try to do it with faith, enthusiasm, dedication and rigour, wholeheartedly. Our commitment to the future starts today, with all of you.

Thank you.