

Entrepreneurship and innovation are terms that have come to be used by a large and growing group of economic, political and social actors, above all across many emerging economies. For a large percentage of the population of these countries, including their leading entrepreneurs, as well as creating employment, the establishment of new businesses is associated with economic development and welfare. It is for this reason that entrepreneurship is currently at the center of a range of public and private programs. For those of us who have been studying and analyzing the phenomenon in recent years the impressive development of entrepreneurship in many Latin American countries is a source of pleasure. However, entrepreneurship is a dynamic phenomenon that offers a continuous flow of interesting research perspectives. This special number of the *Revista Innovar* is dedicated precisely to these matters. The eight articles that appear in this edition highlight the importance of entrepreneurship from different angles, emphasizing in particular the contexts of different Latin American countries. The studies examine the empirical evidence in order to explore questions ranging from the broadest macroeconomic levels such as the regulatory framework and competitiveness, before touching on social aspects such as culture and finally dealing with specific issues such as social capital entrepreneurial education, the internationalization of new businesses and financial mechanisms. These topics are, without doubt, of great importance for the entrepreneurial development of the region. We therefore hope that the studies published here will contribute to academic dialog and to advancing understanding of this important and multi-faceted subject which, as we have emphasized, is of fundamental importance to the development of all countries and, in particular, of the Latin American nations. We hope our readers will enjoy reading them.

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Guest Editors

In Colombia entrepreneurship has been promoted by public policy bodies as well as by educational and industry institutions and private associations. In the field of higher education several universities have promoted and created initiatives and offices to encourage entrepreneurship. The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Unit, run by the Universidad Nacional Faculty of Economic Sciences (Colombia), recently completed a decade of activities. The Unit is currently consolidating its role in encouraging teaching, outreach and research but, above all, as a fundamental support for the entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives of Universidad Nacional students drawn from many disciplines and academic cohorts. The Unit accompanies, advises and develops the entrepreneurial capacity of student entrepreneurs as a way of constructing concrete pathways of progress in the field. It also produces guides, technical bulletins, support documents and specialized studies on entrepreneurship in different sectors. The events and meetings it organizes encourage dialog and the expression of ideas, facilitating mobilization, association and comparison. The innovation dimension has been articulated through the day-to-day activities of the Unit in order to construct bridges, permitting the development of change processes, prototypes and the dissemination of applied knowledge resulting from initiatives developed by student entrepreneurs. The Unit accompanies processes to formalize the recognition of intellectual and industrial property in order to guarantee the rights of innovators. In general, the trajectory of the Unit reveals the important efforts that have been made to consolidate proposals that go beyond meaningless and precarious reproduction, mere subsistence or economic informality. For these reasons, this special number of *INNOVAR* seeks to bring together different research papers on entrepreneurship and innovation, while this editorial itself highlights the actions carried out by our own study center. As our guest editors have rightly pointed out, research into the field of entrepreneurship demonstrates the importance of the topic for Latin America.

Similarly, this special edition also publishes five pieces of research dealing with the question of innovation. As Schumpeter remarked, innovation is central to the dynamism of capitalism. With increasing global interdependence -brought

about, precisely, by technological innovations in the field of computing and communications initiated in the late 1970s- the topic of change, uncertainty and deepening worldwide competition has led to an effervescence of innovation. Thus, innovation is elevated to an indispensable pre-requisite for entrepreneurial survival, for economic development and, above all, for the search for (soft and hard) technological solutions capable of facing up to the social and environmental crises our old technology helped to create. Despite this, it is also important to temper the concept of innovation, which seems to be surrounded by an aura of virtue that allows neither critical revision nor a healthy dose of skepticism. We should recognize that counter-productive innovations also occur and that they may have complex and recurring effects on environmental processes and social stability. Good evidence of this is provided by some of the "financial innovations" that promoted speculation and, in the absence of a proper value system, gave impulse to fraud and the expropriation of the wealth of many

individuals. In addition, the frenetic rhythm of change that has occurred in certain product areas and which threatens the ability of the planet to provide the necessary resources and deal with waste products has been introduced by practices such as planned technological or symbolic obsolescence introduced merely to advance the cycle of production, consumption and disposal. These topics underline the importance and necessity of bringing academic thinking to bear on the question of innovation. We believe that in this number our authors make an important contribution to these efforts.

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