

**Speech as Chair of Working Lunch “Cooperation between Academia and Business”
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It is my privilege to present the invited speakers who will address the theme of this session *Cooperation between Academia and Business*. As chairman of this session, I would like to stress a few topics that I consider relevant for the discussion.

Industrial society is changing at a rapid speed into a communication and knowledge society and the success of a knowledge based economy, and its private sector, largely depends in our days on highly skilled human resources trained by the university. For industry, therefore, what is their primary expectation are the highly qualified human resources that the University can provide. In our debate we will discuss not only these needs but also several other questions that have been already detected. Some of the problems are not only the quantity of students in science/engineering that is decreasing in some countries, but also the quality of the human resources that the companies need for their innovation programs. It is clear that besides supplying the industry with highly trained manpower, the University has a much broader role, namely to provide to each student a solid basic education with a multidisciplinary approach that will enable them to become educated citizens willing to pursue a life long process of learning. Although it is the market that identifies the knowledge that is necessary for innovation, it is the University that should provide short term courses in new fields like biotechnology, nanotechnology, computer science and new materials. In synthesis, the brain-power necessary to drive innovation requires that besides the classical curricula the Universities are open to create opportunities for lifetime learning courses. Another aspect that should be discussed concerning the cooperation between Academia and Business is the transferring of knowledge in application and innovation. The direct participation of University in the innovation process is naturally limited because the University needs to fulfill a broader agenda (social, cultural and economic) as discussed in detail this morning during the session dedicated to the role of universities in the 21st century.

Innovation is a complex phenomenon that depends on the partnership among the government, the academic and the private sectors and the development of new products and processes start by the appropriation of new knowledge that exists usually in the universities. Translation of knowledge from the University to industry will depend mostly on the qualified people working in industry, but it also requires that the university facilitates this transference. Because the majority of research universities are public, this process requires a legal framework to allow this transference of knowledge including the aspects of intellectual property rights, and to permit the professors to be consultants to the industrial sector in advanced areas.

To finalize, I want to stress that to establish a mutual and profitable program between university and industry, it is essential to combine the high academic quality of the university group with an innovative disposition on the side of the enterprises. This requires a common culture for both partners. For this the continuous education courses have shown to be powerful tools and the graduate courses an essential instrument to combine the understanding of the real world problems for the academics and to show the real university potential for those working in the private sector. Industry and university relationship will always comprise some risks and conflicts due to differences on missions and objectives, but this dialogue is essential for the benefit of the society.