



In June 2007, EDUCAUSE Vice President Richard N. Katz and University of British Columbia CIO Ted Dodds began a year-long international research project on behalf of the EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research (ECAR). Their mission is to expand the base of ECAR quantitative research to Europe and Australasia (Australia and New Zealand), to represent EDUCAUSE in interactions with a number of international professional organizations and projects, to build additional support for EDUCAUSE work globally, and to describe exemplary leaders and their work. Among the planned results of this effort was the creation of a series of interviews with influential policymakers and educators.

"Being Present in the World"

Richard N. Katz and Ted Dodds

A Conversation with Professor José Marques dos Santos



The University of Porto was awarded the EUNIS Elite Award for its innovative application of information technology to a European university. This university—nearly one hundred years old—is pressing hard, on a number of fronts, to place itself in the top rank of European universities. The Rector of the University of Porto, Professor José Marques dos Santos, is leading the effort. He is hoping to create a unity of purpose, presence, message, and services that will not only place students at the center of the university's work but also respect the highly decentralized structure and governance of the institution.



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Professor Marques dos Santos was elected Rector of the University of Porto on May 17, 2006. He previously served as Vice Rector of the university for four years and as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering for eleven years. A research-intensive institution, the University of Porto was founded in 1911 and is Portugal's largest university by enrollment size. The university serves more than 30,000 students on three campuses in Porto, the capital city of Northern Portugal.

Professor Marques dos Santos is an electrical engineer and a strong proponent of using information technology to promote and enable the University of Porto's goal of becoming one of Europe's top-ranked universities. The University of Porto is known for its application of information technology to the mission of the university and in 2001 was awarded the Elite Award of EUNIS, the European University Information Systems association.

Katz and Dodds: What is the current focus at the University of Porto?

Marques dos Santos: Important legislation has been enacted about universities in Portugal. It is a very busy time. Our task is to pull the University of Porto to the forefront of European universities. Our goal is to become recognized by 2011 as one of Europe's top 100 universities. To accomplish this, we are developing a strategy in the areas of research, instruction, and internationalization and a set of programs to institutionalize these strategies. Among other things, we want to use information technology not only as a tool for the outside world to connect with the University of Porto but also as a tool for the day-to-day working of the university.

Katz and Dodds: Where are the pressures for change coming from?

Marques dos Santos: Even if the current law that governs the organization and governance of Portuguese universities does not change, we plan to change two things in our university. These involve changes in our fourteen faculties (schools and colleges) and seventy-two research centers. Frankly, this is too many



faculties. The autonomy of these faculties makes it difficult to create a common university identity or critical mass. So we have been working to anticipate the new law and to use it as a catalyst to change the organization and the governance of the university. We currently have governing bodies of 100–150 people trying to make the key decisions of the university. The new law stipulates a new model of governance, with a governing General Council that includes people outside of the university. This Council will select and evaluate the rector, and the rector will be accountable to this Council. This change will occupy our attention for the next several months. Currently, the rector of the university is elected for a period of four years.

Katz and Dodds: In addition to organization and governance, what else are you focusing on?

Marques dos Santos: At the same time we must focus on our mission. We are working to operationalize the Bologna Process. This is an imperfect process, but I feel we must move forward and make corrections over time. We are trying to introduce considerable cooperation between the faculties of the university. Today, changing regulations make it possible for students to take a few courses in the other faculties. In the next months we hope to introduce these changes and to monitor our changes in accord with the Bologna Process.

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center is like its own kingdom, so to speak. We need to define the university's main strategic areas for the next decade and to concentrate on those areas where money will be available for research and where we have the potential to be successful.

Katz and Dodds: Who directs the work of these seventy-two centers?

Marques dos Santos: Some of these centers are independent, private nonprofit associations. The university is a member of these associations through their general assemblies. I participate on many of the general assemblies as a way to understand what the centers are doing.

Katz and Dodds: Please tell us more about your strategy.

Marques dos Santos: We'd like to define possibly four main areas of research: health sciences; media content; energy, environment, and the sea; and technologies. We can focus on these areas to achieve external recognition. For example, in media content, we have a strong connection with the University of Texas at Austin. We are also working to create a media park near Porto.

Another major area of activity we are engaged in is continuous improvement. We have defined terms of reference for the evaluation of every aspect of the university. These terms have been agreed to by the University Senate. We have developed a governance model that involves everyone. We are working to persuade people to develop or collect the information that they will be evaluated on. We want to create a structure of quality evaluation and improvement. This work will prepare us for external evaluations that will come in the future. We must deal with continuous improvement in a comprehensive and structured way. We have a pro-rector who is a professor and who is dedicated to facilitating this process. We want to measure our progress every year.

Another major area of activity is internationalization. We want to improve the mobility of students and staff. By 2010, we want to double the 2005 number of students going abroad from the University of Porto. We also want to increase

the number of students from outside of Portugal who take their degrees here. To do this, we must depend on legislation that will change the current requirement that incoming students take the Portuguese examinations in high school. We are preparing cooperative agreements with the top twenty-five universities in Europe to facilitate student and staff exchanges. This will serve as a catalyst for development. This is not easy. We will use early exchange participants to serve as ambassadors of the university. We are developing joint degree programs with institutions like MIT and Carnegie Mellon. All of this is important so that we can motivate people to work to place the University of Porto among the best European universities.

Katz and Dodds: Why do you believe that internationalization is important?

Marques dos Santos: Contact with different cultures is important to create a culture of openness. I think of it as being

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present in the world. A university must think globally, not just stare at its own navel. Receiving students from abroad is important to become known outside of our country. Members of our community who participate in international programs are our ambassadors. They can publicize our university. Internationalization is a way of receiving new students, new projects, and new resources. It is a way of becoming better known, and this influences how well the university is evaluated internationally. And good ranking affects everything, of course. It is important for the University of Porto

to compete on a global basis in teaching and research.

Katz and Dodds: What do you foresee for European higher education in ten years?

Marques dos Santos: There will be a better understanding of the different systems of education facilitating the free movement of students and professionals across educational institutions. Artificial barriers to educational mobility will be removed.

Katz and Dodds: Why is this so important?

Marques dos Santos: I am a true European. I understand that this is very difficult. There is still a great deal of nationalism that impairs the development of Europe. Internationalization is a means to peace. Europe has never had so many years of peace as it has experienced since we managed to create this common

European vision. For this alone, I think that the Bologna effort will have been worthwhile—very worthwhile. To create a European system of higher education, people will need to be able to understand the nature of academic programs across borders and be able to assess the quality of different programs across borders. I suspect that the landscape of European higher education will be more comprehensible in ten years than it is today and that it will be much stronger and more competitive than it is today. Of course,

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nationalism and chauvinism stand in the way of this. Too often universities have trouble cooperating even with other universities that are their neighbors.

Katz and Dodds: Do other European presidents and rectors share your views?

Marques dos Santos: As far as I can see, other university leaders are optimistic and very involved in the application of the Bologna Accord to their institutions. The Bologna Process is a motivation for change; it is not a template. It is an opportunity to oblige the university to introduce big and important changes. In addition to everything else I have discussed, we must work to define the competencies that students have achieved. This is really what we need to do to make it possible for employers to ascertain the meaning and value of qualifications across different institutions. To do this, we need to change the mentality of our academic staff to adapt teaching methods to an outcomes orientation.

Katz and Dodds: How do you accomplish the pedagogical transformation?

Marques dos Santos: This will be very difficult to accomplish. Computers and technologies will help significantly in this area. I believe in blended learning to develop new ways of promoting learning by students. I don't say “teaching”; I say “learning.” Teachers must become more active in developing learning materials so that students can learn on their own. We need to uncover best teaching and learning practices and to propagate these methods by starting with younger teaching staff and by perhaps making it compulsory for them to learn and use some of these new pedagogies. And we need to make sure that promotion and tenure decisions reward teaching *and* research. It is important for me to promote the diversity of our mission to my colleagues. We are not a research institute; we are a university. We must recognize the importance both of research and of teaching. We need to foster and develop a diversity of those who may be very good researchers and those who may be exceptional teachers. *e*