

SPEECH GIVEN BY TERESA SUSINOS RADA

The University of Cantabria, aware of the importance of internationalization as a response to challenges in the globalized world, has in recent years promoted multiple actions aimed at extending its presence and participation in the international academic world, as well as its importance in the formation and management of knowledge beyond the boundaries of the institution itself. Some of these initiatives have been compromised with the increase in the number of agreements with institutions in different parts of the world, with the active promotion of student mobility or with a firm commitment to improving the linguistic capacity of students and lecturers as a basic tool in international communication and an improvement in educational and professional opportunities for our students.

Within this context, the existence of long-term institutional relationships with academically outstanding universities is especially commendable, as is the case of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Thus, even after numerous difficulties involving collaborative and joint work between universities from different countries, these institutional relations have been maintained, widened and enriched mutually over the years. At a time in which the future predicts a constant increase in institutions with which the University of Cantabria will maintain contact, it is fitting to stop and appreciate the ground we have covered, and value the oldest agreement in our University, as is deserved. This agreement is a milestone with regards to the fact that it seals the beginning of this current concern with internationalization and is the origin of the progressive expansion and diversification of the exchange activities which we are trying to promote with good will and imagination.

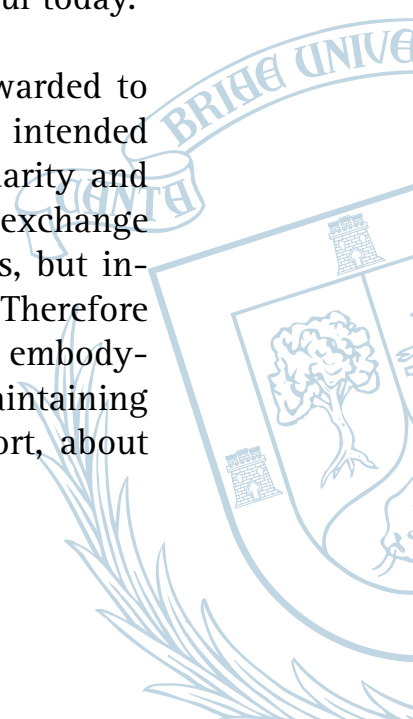
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is a public University located in the city of Charlotte in the United States. It is currently the second university of the 17 institutions of the public university

system in the State of North Carolina. It has more than 26,000 students and it is a university with a long history of research in various branches of knowledge. The relationship between the University of Cantabria and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte is now 30 years old. The first exchanges and joint activities were not regulated until the signing of the first Convention, which took place in 1986. This first agreement has been renewed on several occasions in order to adapt to the new conditions of relationship that have been established between the two institutions. Since then and up to the present time, multiple actions of cooperation have been carried in almost all aspects related to mobility.

The beginnings of this institutional exchange had to do with a study program about Spanish and the Spanish culture and it still continues today in a more stable, prolonged and more frequent format. Based on this original proposal, relationships of academic cooperation and mobility were established, for teaching and research purposes in other areas of the University such as Civil Engineering, Geography, History, Business Administration or Physics. The exchange programme for undergraduate students has remained throughout the years without any interruptions, with nearly 700 Spanish and American students during this period.

Without a doubt, all these actions would not have been possible without the continuous and effective work of many people (at the moment it is impossible for me to mention them all in detail), who, in the field of teaching, as well as in research and management, have participated for years in numerous and varied collaboration initiatives and to whom our University is especially grateful today.

To finish off, I only have to say that the Gold Medal awarded to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) is intended to show recognition of the values of responsibility, solidarity and partnership in International Relations, allowing a fruitful exchange between geographically and culturally distant institutions, but institutions which are close in their interests and objectives. Therefore this medal symbolizes these principles and it does so by embodying them in this institution, with whom we have been maintaining long and invaluable bilateral relations. It tells us, in short, about



the strategic importance at this present time that the actions of internationalization have for the University of Cantabria, and of our commitment to increase and intensify those relations, allowing us to widen the horizon of knowledge and try new models for university cooperation.

