

ADVANCES IN SCIENCE

# JANUS: INITIATIVE FOR A NEW RESEARCH MODEL





Professors from several Schools and Faculties at the Universidad del Rosario are collaborating on a pilot project that has demonstrated the advantages of a multidisciplinary approach to conducting research. The focus of this initiative is peace, conflict, and the Colombian postconflict period.

**T**he University established Janus: the Group for Interdisciplinary Studies on Peace, Conflict and the Postconflict Period in response to several strategic institutional challenges it has been facing. In its first 18 months of existence, Janus has demonstrated new forms of organization for carrying out high-quality research. Its central element is the bringing together of different disciplines to tackle real global situations, one of the puzzles that fired the creation of the group.

“In terms of research, the University had been a highly-drilled environment with much dynamism within each discipline, yet it had developed very few interdisciplinary strengths. To change this, it set up an academic unit that carries out teaching, research, and outreach, one that has produced the evidence to show that a group of academics from varied fields of knowledge can work together in establishing a dialogue between those different areas, and one that brings much added value,” explains Stéphanie Lavaux, the University’s Vice President and Provost.

A total of 30 professors from all the University’s Schools and Faculties make up the group known as Janus, inspired by the model of “research group incubators” used by other institutions around the world. Facets of this model include the integration of aims, thinking up totally interdisciplinary products, using flexible organization, and providing spaces for interdisciplinary collaboration.

“We have been able to build trust among professors, which was positive for the development of the joint research projects and products that are now emerging. We’re starting to see new chairs in our academic programs, as well as new postgraduate degrees, interdisciplinary doctorates, and informal courses,” points out Lavaux.

← The group’s research projects nurture and sustain debates in Colombia related to peace, conflict, and the postconflict period, and this can raise citizen awareness and knowledge in these areas.



← Janus members used to conduct research with foreign universities and professors individually, but today they do so jointly through domestic and international networks.

### KNOWLEDGE AT THE SERVICE OF THE COUNTRY

Janus is also rising to the challenge posed by the situation Colombia is currently facing, but it is not focusing on the Havana Peace Accords. This is because Janus does not monitor what was agreed on there, nor is it essentially spotlighting the postconflict period. “The group conducts interdisciplinary work on lines made up from conflicts—in the plural, because they are multiple—as well as peace and postconflict developments in Colombia and other parts of the world. That is its added value. It is not just monitoring how our peace process is going, but rather contributing experiences, working with involved public and private entities, and sharing this knowledge for the benefit of the country,” explains Lavaux.

For these reasons, the challenge for Janus was to harness institutional strengths in support of the national agenda. In other words, it aimed for research carried out by the group to nourish national debates related to peace, conflict, and post-conflict issues, while also raising citizen awareness and understanding of these issues. “Janus extended the reach of its research with actions in 27 of Colombia’s 32 departments,” notes Lavaux.

Finally, the group sought to boost international awareness of Colombia’s national agenda, under the premise that this would produce “a ‘glocal’ analysis of problems that are really global, but which must be contextualized according to local conditions. This local frame of analysis is what makes it possible for us to learn from the good and bad practices seen in other countries,” she adds.

Taking this approach, Janus insists that it does not study the conflict, but rather conflicts, since the experiences of other countries show that on emerging from armed conflicts lasting several years, societies must grapple with conflicts that had remained hidden.

**THE UNIVERSIDAD DEL ROSARIO ESTABLISHED AN ACADEMIC UNIT THAT PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT A GROUP OF PROFESSORS WITH WIDELY DIFFERING SPECIALIZATIONS CAN WORK COLLABORATIVELY, FORGING DIALOGUE AMONG THEIR DIFFERENT AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE**

Through their grasp of international issues, Janus researchers have the opportunity to establish dialogue between Colombian and other global contexts. Most of them have previously conducted research with international universities and professors, but now they do so jointly through national and international networks.

“The networks that researchers previously worked in have been maintained and broadened to encompass the interdisciplinarity that we represent today, but we are also very involved with domestic and international university consortia and in collaborative bodies such as the

International Alliance of Universities for Peace and the German-Colombian Peace Institute, explains the Vice President and Provost.

The group’s success, thanks to the commitment of professors, the support of University leadership, and the time invested in defining the parameters of research, has made it possible to demonstrate the suitability of this research model to today’s world. Now the Universidad del Rosario is preparing to replicate it for research in three new areas: aging, climate change, and gender. ■



# EL Rosario's Contributions to Peace in Colombia

The issue of Peace in Colombia has been widely analyzed since 2012, when conversations began between the national government and the FARC. The Universidad del Rosario has contributed different visions and perspectives on the process through the University Office on Contributions to Great National Debates.

The Office has established an agenda that creates, promotes, strengthens, and organizes high-quality academic events to consider, educate, debate on, and deeply explore high-impact issues for the country. Its goal is to contribute to the construction of a better Colombia.

**35**  
COUNTRIES  
HAVE INTERACTED  
THROUGH SOCIAL  
NETWORKS.



**10.700**  
**62 MILLION**

tweets  
have been  
published on  
the peace  
forums.

twitter accounts reached.

**13**  
NATIONAL  
FORUMS ABOUT  
THE HAVANA  
PEACE PROCESS

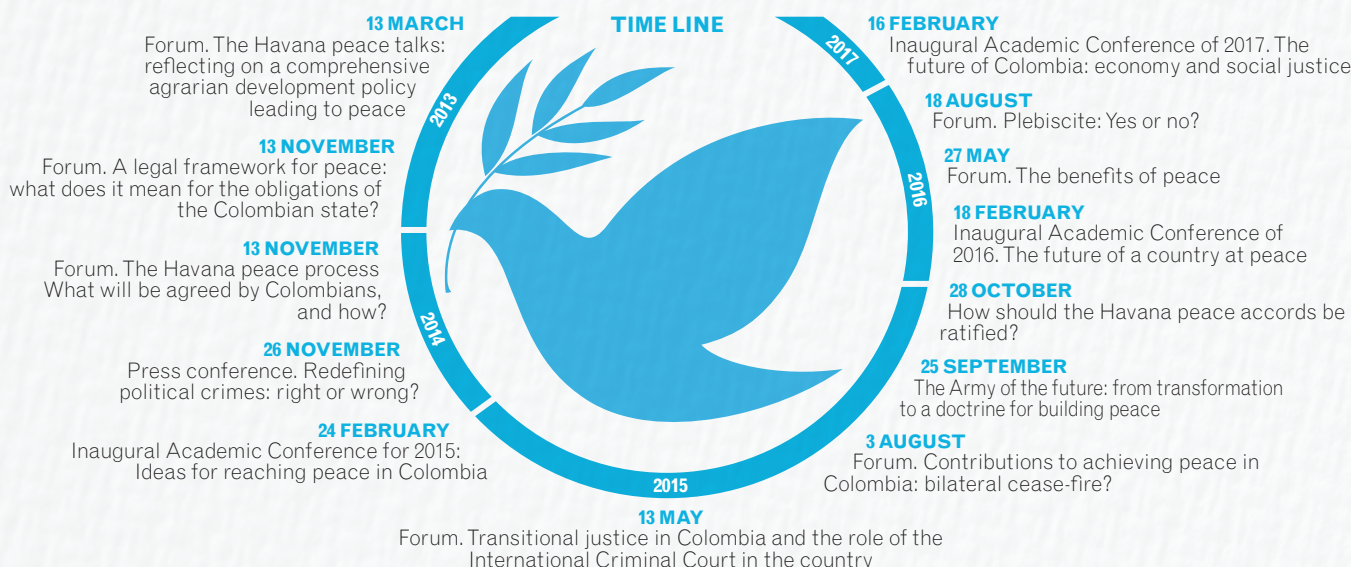


**898**  
MENTIONS IN  
COMMUNICATIONS  
MEDIA



**5.000**  
in-person participants

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## OTHER INITIATIVES

- In 2016, 84 instructors from the National Learning Service (SENA), together with the Universidad del Rosario, founded the Group for Interdisciplinary Studies on Conflict and Peace (JANUS) to promote a culture of peace among SENA's apprentices, instructors, and leadership. SENA has a national presence, stretching to parts of Colombia affected by the conflict, and conducts vocational training among vulnerable population sectors and demobilized combatants. The new alliance came into being through the diploma course Pedagogies for Peace.
- 40 research projects in areas strategic for peace, conflict, and the post-conflict period, and more than 500 scientific publications.
- 11 postgraduate programs with an emphasis on peace and the post-conflict period.