Magna Charta: Values-based responses to the academic Freedom crisis

David J. Lock
Secretary General
Context – 1980s

European concern about erosion of autonomy
- Financial pressures from governments to move from traditional to business orientation
- Growing interest in internationalisation and student mobility – relations between E and W
- Autonomy and Academic Freedom essential

Council of European Rectors (EUA Predecessor) felt the need for a strong public statement

900th Anniversary of University of Bologna 1988
Magna Charta Universitatum signed by 388 Rectors
The MCU Fundamental principles

1. The university is an autonomous institution which produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching.
2. Its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.
3. Teaching and research must be inseparable if tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge.
The MCU Fundamental principles

3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement.

4. A university ....should attain universal knowledge; .....transcend geographical and political frontiers, affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.

5. Act with integrity
**Magna Charta Observatory - 2000**

Promotes the fulfilment and defence of institutional autonomy and academic freedom

Global guardian of fundamental values

960 signatory universities from 94 countries

Works by:
- Gathering Information
- Commissioning Research
- Monitoring
- Expressing Opinions
- Preparing Publications
- Making Presentations
- Conferences and workshops
- Living Values Project
- Partnering with Kindred Bodies
- Website
- Working with Signatories
New Magna Charta  2020 - Why?

- Faster pace of change
- Globalisation
- Climate emergency
- UN SDGs
- 4th Industrial Rev
- Univs more important for society (E.g. COVID)
- Greater public interest
- Greater regulation and interference

- Political mis-trust
- More diverse expectations from a wider range of stakeholder
- Erosion of trust in science and experts
- ITC and pedagogy advances
- Social media and speed of communications
- More competition

Any others?
Magna Charta Universitatum 2020

Drafted by internationally diverse group after wide consultation. .......for universities globally
Nothing taken away from MCU 1988 – More added on responsibilities of universities
Enquiry, analysis and sound action - still vital
Expressed in terms of Principles, Values and Responsibilities
Engage and respond to global challenges for sustainability
Intellectual and moral autonomy – independence should be protected
Magna Charta Universitatum 2020

Reliable social contract with civil society
Question dogmas - encourage critical thinking
Teaching and Research
ethically, integrity, trustworthy results
Part of global networks – but embedded locally
Tolerance, inclusivity, equity and fairness
Education a human right, Life Long Learning
available to all
Access to HE – engage diverse perspectives
Living Values Project: Purpose

To help universities and higher education institutions ensure that:

the values they espouse reflect the institution’s mission and community;
staff, students, and stakeholders have been effectively engaged in defining those values; and
all members of the institution are able to articulate and effectively live by these defined values.
“Important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. Values have major influence on a person's behaviour and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations.” (Sijbolt Noorda)

Fundamental values (institutional autonomy, academic freedom, social responsibility) and other institution-specific values.
Living Values Project: Stages

1. Initiation and plan
2. Identification of a map of values
3. Define how selected values manifest in practice
4. Relate behaviours to functions/domains
5. Conversion of values into desired behaviour
6. Conversion of outcomes into strategic plan and other policies
7. Reflection on the process, effectiveness and next cycle.
Living Values Project: Benefits

Unique for each institution
Depends on:
  starting point/circumstances/objectives
Affects:
  Governance – strategic plans
  Processes
  Behaviours

Ultimately:
  enhanced performance in T&L, R, Service to the Community
  More engaged staff/stronger community
  More understanding/engaged stakeholders
Final thoughts

MCU – owned by universities
Values – owned by universities
Serving Society – justifying academic freedom

By signing the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 universities declare their commitment to the original declaration and to upholding and advancing the Principles, Values and Responsibilities stated above, to strengthen the role of universities in the preservation of the planet and promoting health, prosperity, and enlightenment around the world.
Thank you for your attention.

David J. Lock
Davidjohn.lock@unibo.it
http://www.magna-charta.org