



“UTOPIA”

"Utopia is an early idea, desire and incitement
that bubbles up in a society and leads to
substantial changes
Karl Mannheim

La Salle University is pleased to present “Utopia” project, a unique concept that integrates the creation of educational and productive opportunities for young people in rural areas, of limited income and who have been affected by violence. It aims to convert them into leaders capable of achieving social, political and productive transformation in the country and give a new and significant contribution to reinvent the agricultural sector of Colombia and achieve sustainable agricultural conversion through participatory research and the transfer of new technologies.

We invite you to make this brief journey around UTOPIA

Our institution

La Salle University is a privately owned, common utility, non-profit, higher education institution. It draws on a Christian vision of the person, the world, history and knowledge.

Its academic work began in the first half of 1965 and has since undergone a process of continuous growth, academic building, sustainability and consistent quality.

Currently 23 undergraduate academic programs in different areas of knowledge, 11 specialization programs and 10 Masters programs are offered. There are 13,950 students enrolled in undergraduate and 700 graduate students who are served by an excellent group of teachers with high academic quality. To date, the university has about 40,000 graduates.

The university generates scientific and technological knowledge from research in order to contribute to the solution of the country's pressing problems with social relevance and projection. It is also one of the leading universities in the field of agricultural sciences in the country.

For the development of its academic activities, La Salle University has four campuses strategically located in La Candelaria, Chapinero and to the north of the city of Bogotá, with a total of 103,721 m² of construction, and the campus of Yopal in Casanare.

The University belongs to the Lasallian educational network that has an educational presence in over 80 countries, with institutions at all levels from preschool to higher education and non-formal education and work. 75 are higher education institutions, 23 of which are in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The University has a solid financial structure that allows it to sustain its operation and undertake major projects in research, infrastructure and professorial training.

Our Challenge

As a country we have been living with a structurally weak agricultural sector, mired in a vicious circle in which causes and effects feed each other, maintaining its position of prostration. In rural areas, extreme difficulties arise, in addition to explaining the lack of credibility and trust with decision to invest in the sector, its effects extend to the rest of the nation by violence, poverty, displacement and inequality.

However, there are signs of hope and optimism, as the sector becomes “locomotive for the development of the country” with determination and creativity to address the problems unresolved for decades. This will establish significant steps that will have a positive impact on sovereignty and food security, economic sustainability of agriculture, improvements in living conditions of Colombians living in rural areas and building a peaceful, fair and equitable Colombia.

Among the many challenges facing our youth in the rural sector and employers in the field are, in addition to the vicissitudes of nature, land tenure systems inequitable and unproductive barriers to the education of poor quality, lack of technology, lack of infrastructure, underdeveloped domestic markets and external hostile to the interests of small farmers in Colombia and, of course, the complex issue of violence fueled by drug trafficking, guerrilla and paramilitary groups, whose positions are extreme and not dilated yet conciliatory formalizing real stage post-conflict situations. However, it is gradually taking shape and being accepted as a virtual reality.

Setting out a significant and novel contribution to the solution of these problems is our **UTOPIA PROJECT**.

Project objectives and challenges

The project has two main objectives: to convert young graduates in rural areas affected by violence into Agricultural Engineers with the best possible training and methodology “learning by doing and teaching by showing”, making them leaders for social and political transformation, field production entrepreneurship in their places of origin.

This means for the university a major challenge: students living on campus have experienced violence in the country, come from the deep Colombia where the opportunities are virtually nonexistent, poverty is common, and have pressure or temptation from armed groups to join their ranks. We will help them find the faith and hope in what they can, we will do our utmost to touch their hearts, to awaken the goodness and solidarity, and we will give them the best technical and scientific education to be engineers that contribute to construction of the new country. The challenges are enormous, ranging from attention to their psychological and social conditions, to the urgency of achieving national and international funding to sustain the program in the coming years.

UTOPIA transforms the lives of young people in rural areas

The first semester of classes for the first cohort of 64 young people started on May 22, 2010 and annually in the month of May, 64 more arrive. Utopia will have a total capacity of 400 students enrolled simultaneously at different levels of the academic program and is expected in the near term to accept 100 young people each year.

These young men and women come from peasant families, very low income, consisting of several children, who have lived contexts of violence.

Our students speak

The following are some testimonials from current students of Utopia:

“My family is purely peasant, my dad grew up in the country and my grandfather still lives and works in the field. There are 4 of us as children and I am the eldest. My mother devoted herself to the field that the women in my area do, raise

animals, pigs and sheep “ (Yimmy)

“We were 12, but three died, one shot, one stabbed and one died a natural death” (Arthur).

“I worked and My mom gave me moral support and the inn. Moreover, it was economics; I, working on weekends, paid it for. In order to get to Utopia, some teachers supported me, knew my situation and told me to apply. I want to study and become someone in life, to elevate myself to get my mom my family and my brothers and sisters out. I am here to fight to get ahead and be an agronomist to go to work in my village. (Octavio)

“Utopia is a fantastic experience; I don’t have the precise words to explain. But we are dreamers but of dreams and not of impossible things”. (Mary)

“Utopia is a dream that someone thought about and now we're going to make it a reality " (Anderson)

The admission process

In Utopia, the University is looking for young people through careful logistic that lasts about two months. An interdisciplinary team of professionals covers the vast territory of the nation looking for the best candidates to join the Agricultural Engineering program. With the help of the bishops and pastors in the area, principals and professors of colleges and community leaders, young men and women with leadership profile convene in an educational or cultural centre:

- Between 18-22 years of age
- Bachelor's degree (preferably agricultural college)
- Have taken the ICFES (High School Graduating Test)
- Have been a graduate for at least 1 year
- For the 2011 cohort, preferably be a native from the departments that comprise the Amazon-Orinoquia in Colombia (Arauca, Casanare, Meta, Vichada, Guaviare, Guainia, Vaupes, Amazonas, Caquetá and Putumayo States).
- Low family income
- Be classified in levels one or two of SISBEN (Social Security of the State)
- Excellent medical health
- Single, no children
- To be or belong to a family classified as a small producer, according to the provisions of the Family Agricultural Unit (UAF) of each municipality, or be an employee or child of a farm worker
- Demonstrate an interest in returning to the land where they were born or grew up, and interest in contributing to the development of their region
- Leadership characteristics
- Commitment to the countryside and agriculture
- Psychosocial competencies that promote harmonious coexistence

- Commitment to live on the Yopal campus for the duration of their studies (full time), with short periods of academic breaks

Personal interviews, role-plays and other activities are conducted, which allow the selection team to decide who should be admitted and therefore be Utopia Grant recipients. We are looking for leaders and we accept the challenge of balancing them out with subjects that allow them to quickly make up for some shortcomings in their previous schooling and elevate them quickly and methodologically to the academic level required by the University.

Incorporation of graduates to industry

We don't doubt that graduates of Agricultural Engineering are highly sought professionals in companies in the sector. However, the program primarily aims to arouse and develop in students the entrepreneurial spirit that allows them to formulate and conduct an entrepreneurship project in the field.

The University wishes to make alliances with the private sector and government to establish programs for financing the project and some type of support to ensure the successful return and establishment of our graduates to their areas of origin where they will become disseminators of knowledge and technologies among neighbors, relatives and friends and generate wealth through their business and production projects.

In summary:

We dream of a Colombia where there are young people - men and women - professionals in rural areas, agricultural engineers, technically and scientifically trained to help build a new country; of young people to be leaders for the social, political and productive changes in their places of origin. Men and women affected by violence and survivors of conflict to which we can awaken the heart in order to bring goodness and solidarity to life.

We believe it is possible to overcome violence and conflict that has plagued Colombia for decades, through creating opportunities for vulnerable populations, especially those in rural areas and the generation of peace initiatives to acclimatize and to strengthen the social fabric.

We know that good education helps in the social and political processes to form new generations of peace management and adding value to agricultural production through research, innovation and development.

We trust in our offer of quality education socially responsible and professional programs expressed in high-level research and backed by a solid institution with a historically and socially responsible tradition.

We participate in sustainable agricultural conversion through participatory research and the transfer of new technologies and the creation of agribusiness associations, the gestation of quality processes and strengthening agribusiness and agro exports.

We contribute to teaching and alternative pedagogies such as “learning by doing” and “teaching by demonstrating”.

We add to the country's agricultural development through agricultural research in strategic areas including biotechnology and developing training programs in agricultural sciences and with regard to knowledge transfer.

This is our Utopia. We want to materialize, through the design and development of an “**educational, social, agro-technology research park**,” a unique concept, a space where innovation happens, a proposal for the reinvention of agricultural Colombia and a place where we all contribute to building the country we deserve.

Components of Utopia

Utopia is a great project that consists of three major elements that make up its entirety: the Agricultural Engineering Program, the Lasallian Center of Agricultural and Livestock Research and the Training Program for Social, Political and Productive Leadership. Consequently, entrepreneurship in the field should result.

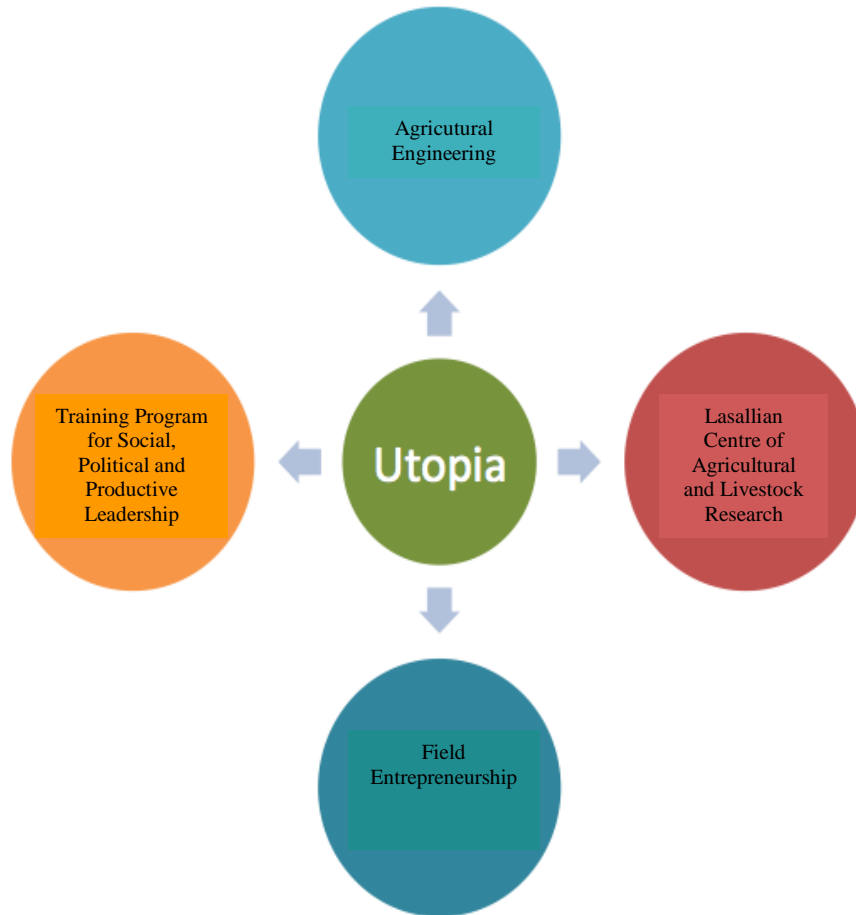


Fig 1. Components of UTOPIA

Stage and size of the university campus

The scenario in which Utopia is carried out is a comprehensive university campus whose construction is underway in an area of approximately 20 hectares, located at the San José de Matadepantano Ranch, 13 kilometers from the urban area of El Yopal - Casanare, which, likewise, has 1,200 acres that are gradually becoming part of crop and livestock production associated with Project Utopia.

The architecture of the complex uses the “llanero” constructive model that is distinguished by the complete harmony with nature and use of the environment to make buildings more efficient. All the production processes that the project demands or generates will be characterized by the fulfillment of the standards of production environmentally responsible and respectful of water, land, food safety and the environment.

The complete construction of the university campus is expected to be developed in three stages: the first, which was launched in October 2009, has been completed while the two remaining stages will be completed in 2012.

The first stage has provided infrastructure and services throughout the campus and provided facilities of 9,900 m², among which include, in addition to others, over 1,100 m² of classrooms, about 1,600 m² of laboratories, 500 m² of Systems rooms and 500 m² of restaurant. The next stages will continue with 4,000 m² of housing that will accommodate students and teachers to meet the needs of 2010 -2012.

In its overall design, the campus will have more than 22,000 m² of which about 12,000 m² will be allocated to welfare and housing, 6,000 m² to academic areas such as classrooms, auditoriums, laboratories, library and some multiple 4,600 m² to administrative areas.

The development of Project Utopia Utopia as it pertains to land, infrastructure, buildings and equipment campus demand at today's prices near U.S. \$ 33 million, which breaks down as follows:

INVESTMENTS - Concept	Value in Millions USD
Land (Aprox. 1.200 Hectares)	10
Development Phase I (Aprox. 10.000 m ²)	10
Development Phase II (Aprox. 6.000 m ²)	6
Development Phase III (Aprox. 6.000 m ²)	6
Aid/Funding	1
TOTAL	33

The La Salle University has a strong heritage and financial liquidity, which has helped finance the start of the project. Contributions amount to USD 19 million. Your participation in said funding is represented in investments in the grounds of the San José de Matadepantano Ranch, estimated at USD 10 million and 50% of investments in the construction of the first stage, i.e. USD 6 million.

Additionally, in a transitional scheme, the university temporarily provided resources of some USD 4 million to supplement the remaining 50% of the construction of the first stage in order to initiate academic activities planned in May 2010, pending national and international in contributions the amount of approximately USD 23 million to consolidate its development and continue with the next stages.

Short and long term Program Support

The program relies on the Ministry of National Education and all teachers have

excellent academic training at the postgraduate level.

The calculations indicate that the investment per student over the 4 years that the agricultural engineering course is scheduled to run amounts to \$ 75 million pesos, given that this is a program that also provides accommodation and food within a scheme of scholarships and grants. Of this figure, the young people contribute the equivalent to a legal minimum wage per semester, which in turn accounts for 9% of total expenditure that their academic training and support demands. The rest should be financed through a scholarship program designed for that purpose.

To achieve short and long term sustainability a development plan whose strategy has four pillars has been created:

- to seek corporate support for an ongoing scholarship program
- to gain access, first and foremost, to local resources and international co-operations to finish construction and to equip the campus
- to develop an operation program for the farm surrounding the campus where the fruits of research can be applied and demonstrated, and where they can be marketed
- to achieve alimentary sustainability of the campus with farm production

Utopia presents great challenges to creativity, among them, the sustainability of the project in time that will only be achieved through solidarity. We decided to start but now we have to fight to make utopia a sustainable project. We know that generosity exists but it is necessary to light the spark that ignites it. We want the country and those who have the means to invest in the education of young people in rural areas, as it is part of the social responsibility to which we are invited.

For decades, young rural Colombians have been enlisted into armed groups, perhaps poverty and the lack of opportunities have helped push this conflict that has bloodied our country. Utopia is an opportunity to invest in the hope of a peaceful country, generating wealth and it is destined to become a food pantry for a starving world. Our hopeful and brotherly call goes to companies, local and national government and Colombians of good will that help us to keep the project alive and contribute to the education of generations of young people who will pass through Utopia to help build at the same time, the national utopia.

How to join the project?

You or your company can join through four support programs:

- **“Utopia Scholarships”** program for youth education
- **“Building Utopia”** program for construction and the Campus
- **“Small Donors”** program to join with others and contribute to the project
- **“We Dream Utopia”** program to develop productive projects that allow self-sustainability

Join the project and be part of the team that commits to the Colombia that we all deserve.

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