

R&D in the DR = UNI3

Estimates place R&D Investment levels in the DR at 0.06% of the GDP, one of the lowest in the region

To address this need the Dominican Government has engaged the former President of the US-based Stevens Institute of Technology, a globally recognized private university focused on education, research and entrepreneurship



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The establishment of the “Universidad Nacional de Investigacion, Ingenieria, e Innovacion” (UNI3) is the transformational investment that benefits all Dominicans.

The strategy to accelerate the economic development, industrial competitiveness and improvements in the quality of life of all Dominican includes the growth of small and medium size enterprises (SME's) and corporations founded by Dominicans, as well as the capacity to invent technologies in-country that help solve the nation's problems.

This requires a growing talent pool of researchers and techno-entrepreneurs whose work drives the development of new products and services that create employment, attract investment and advance the greater well-being of all Dominicans.

How can this innovative talent pool be nurtured and sustained? The establishment of the Universidad Nacional de Investigacion, Ingenieria, e Innovacion, whose research and doctoral programs are focused on national priorities, will develop the high tech talent pool in the DR to ac-

celerate economic growth and industrial competitiveness, as well as improve living conditions for all Dominicans.

This strategy has been realized by Brazil, Mexico, India, and countries throughout Asia. Israel, which is smaller than the DR, now has the second largest number of start-up companies quoted on Nasdaq because it designed and implemented an innovation strategy based on national priorities. Singapore, a City-State, is emerging as a world-class economic force through the strategy of investment in R&D and building on its strengths in systems and banking. Japan, Korea and Taiwan chose similar strategic paths about 40 years ago; they have steadily emerged to become key players in the high tech global economy.

Over the past several years the DR has experienced many advances in its infrastructure and in foreign investment. The DR now has world-class airports and shipping ports as well as a robust and ever increasing tourism industry. Santo Domingo has a metro to provide low cost transportation and alleviate vehicular congestion. There are new highways and bridges providing vital links to hubs such as Santiago, Punta Cana and Samana.

It is now time for the DR to invest in building the capacity of its high tech work force and talent pool of innovators and techno-entrepreneurs through the establishment of UNI3.

The academic and R&D strategy for UNI3 is to recruit a world-class faculty that have a record of success in innovation in research and to focus on areas that align with the economic and social priorities of the DR. These include communications and software engineering, manufacturing engineering, green energy and environmental technologies, pharmaceutical and health care products and design.

The startup strategy is to begin with a small faculty whose research programs benefit

industry and lead to intellectual property to launch new start up enterprises, establish partnerships with existing companies or be licensed. With a financial commitment from the DR government for infrastructure and seed support for operating expenses, UNI3 can begin to develop the fiscal resources to sustain and grow the country's first research university. As UNI3 opens, collaboration will be established with Dominican universities and linkages forged with businesses in and beyond the DR. When the approval process to offer master's and doctoral degrees is completed through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the recruitment of students will commence.

The goals and mission of the Parque Cibernético Santo Domingo (PCSD/CyberPark) as well as its strategic location, make this center of business and industry an ideal location for UNI3. The presence of ITLA in the PCSD provides the longer term opportunity to establish an undergraduate program should ITLA obtain university status in the future.

Innovation involves harvesting the benefit of new or improved products, services or processes. Innovation and GDP growth are intimately related. At present, the DR is greatly dependent for employment on outsourcing from multinationals. This is precarious position because it creates short term employment that will move to lower cost manufacturing centers in Asia, India and elsewhere as experienced in the DR's garment industry.

By pursuing the path of technological innovation through the establishment of UNI3, new enterprises will be launched by Dominicans and wealth be created by and for Dominicans. The DR must make an investment of political will-power and resources to launch UNI3. If this strategic investment is made now, the DR will reap large dividends. If the country's first research university is not established, the economy of the DR will be largely dependent on tourism, and employment from multinational companies seeking incentives and low cost labor.

I have great optimism for the DR because of the creativity, resiliency and positive thinking of its people. My hope is that the DR government and friends of the DR will make the financial commitment now to give the great Dominican people the opportunity to become innovators and techno-entrepreneurs by establishing UNI3.