

UCA MARTYRS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The UCA Martyrs scholarship program grew up gradually over the last eleven years. Each year we have tightened up the process, often with help from the Casa de la Solidaridad.

The program is administered by a committee which consists of four UCA professors (including myself and two professors who supervise the tutors -- see below), the administrator of Centro Mons. Romero (Mayra Herrera), the director of admissions of the UCA, the head of pastoral activity at the CMR (Fito Hernández) and the accountant of the CMR (Guillermo Amaya).

At present there are approximately 40 scholarship students participating in the program, (depending on whether you count students with different sources of funding).

The UCA itself does not give scholarships. We (Rafa de Sivatte, SJ, the Casa de la Solidaridad and Dean Brackley, SJ) raise money to pay students' tuition and other expenses. Tuition at the UCA is steeply graded according to the income of the student's household. For 2004, tuition is \$41.00 per month for the poorest and \$200.00 per month for the wealthiest. Scholarship students are usually granted the minimum monthly tuition.

A scholarship costs about \$900.00 per year. That includes \$41.00 monthly tuition times 10 months, or \$410, as well as a series of other costs which are not scaled according to income: the admissions course, registration fees, lab fees, summer school courses (which students frequently have to or decide to take) -- and sometimes books and supplies, photocopying and transportation, if needed --, all of which roughly doubles the annual cost. Some students need additional funds to cover basic living expenses (food, for example!).

The minimum tuition for incoming students rises each year. It also increases for each student as s/he advances through the university. Most students enroll in a licentiate program which takes five years, plus a one-semester graduation project. A few enter a three-year program to train as teachers. Since tuitions rise in this way, a full scholarship would cost approximately \$5,500 for a licentiate.

Very rarely, we send a student to another university or institute of higher learning (like ITCA) when aptitude tests indicates that a student is capable but that the UCA does not offer what they need. These students remain full participants in all aspects of the scholarship program.

What is the process for securing a scholarship in this program? Since those of us who help with this program do so on a voluntary basis, we are unable to do an adequate initial screening. We therefore rely initially on credible references, usually from a parish or religious community, that assure us that the candidate fulfills the three basic criteria of the program: extreme economic need, academic potential, and an attitude of service and cooperation.

All candidates enter a 3- or 4-month tutoring program (starting in 2004 this begins in April and ends in October, quite a bit longer than in the past) to get them up to speed and to

determine who can really survive in the UCA.

During this period of tutoring, there are regular exams and snooping out of whether someone has undisclosed economic resources, etc. We began this year, 2004, with over 50 candidates for approximately 9 possible scholarships for academic year 2005.

In late November, the scholarship committee evaluates how candidates have performed in this tutoring program.

Depending on the money available and students' aptness, we admit approximately 9 students conditionally in December. In January and February, they take the admissions course which they usually pass. Regular classes begin in March of each year.

The scholarship program has developed gradually, as I said. About eleven years ago, Rafael de Sivatte and I each begged funds for some students. In my case, a delegation of laypeople affiliated with the Jesuits of the Wisconsin Province made a commitment to finance several students. From there the program has gradually expanded. In the last few years, the Casa de la Solidaridad, sponsored by Santa Clara University, has become a major help in securing funding.

The program has also become more structured over the years. For example, June of 2004, we initiated a process through which we "pruned" the program, eliminating or reducing the monthly allotment to eight students who are in 4th or 5th year and whose economic situation has improved notably since they entered the program. Several have jobs. We used a formal questionnaire and applied criteria developed with the help of the UCA's tuition and loan office ("Cuotas Diferenciadas"). We plan to do this each year.

Naturally, students need social and academic support during their studies. The scholarship program includes monthly meetings and other activities. If students have academic troubles, they can get tutoring help.

The opening of Casa Ita Ford, a residence for scholarship students sponsored by the Casa de la Solidaridad, has opened a whole new chapter with new possibilities for formation.

We are presently engaged in drafting, with students' participation, a Constitution specifying the terms of the covenant between the Centro Mons. Romero program and the students.

Dean Brackley, SJ
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