



In late August, Prof. **Jordi Canals** will step down as IESE's dean, after 15 years of "leadership and service," in the words of the president of the University of Navarra, **Alfonso Sánchez-Tabernero**. In this interview, we look back on the milestones of his tenure and the evolution of IESE during this time.

After 15 years as dean, how would you describe IESE today?

IESE is a business school with a great team of professors and professionals and a clear sense of mission and service to business leaders, companies and society; with values that promote excellence in management, rooted in a spirit of service and with an ethical orientation. This is a fundamental part of the mission that formed St. Josemaría Escrivá's legacy to the University of Navarra.

Together with these values, IESE has always sought to innovate, become more international, and generate new ideas that might be useful for management, and to make an impact on society. For more than 50 years, IESE has created new programs in response to the changing needs of the business world and will continue to do so. In the future, we will have programs with different formats, with modules in diverse locations of the world, where technology and digital learning will combine with face-to-face learning on the school's campuses, but the fundamental values will keep nurturing its activity. This combination of enduring values and ability to adapt is essential in defining IESE.

How has IESE been able to keep moving ahead during the crisis, since 2008?

This has been the most severe financial crisis that the world has experienced since the 1930s. IESE has been able to move forward thanks to three solid pillars. First, the sense of mission has been like a guiding star for us. It

Jordi Canals, Dean of IESE

“Leadership and management are about people”

has been a beacon for the basic values and principles of management, and reminds us how to adapt in order to help business leaders and companies.

The second pillar has been IESE's clear strategy; that is, knowing what we had to do and what we had to avoid. For example, it would have been relatively easy to launch programs targeted at the mass market and slightly lower quality to reduce expenses; but we have continued investing in the quality of the programs and created new ones.

We launched modules in the second year of the MBA in China, New York, Sao Paulo and Kenya; in Executive Education, we have launched new offerings such as the Global CEO Program. In Custom Programs, we have introduced digital learning platforms. Having a clear orientation has allowed us to progress, in spite of challenges in the environment and the difficulties that many of our client companies have had faced.

The third factor has been the commitment and professionalism of the IESE faculty, staff and alumni. It is remarkable to see how, during these years when economic activity stagnated, IESE has been able to launch new programs and maintain steady growth year after year. We launched the Executive MBA in Barcelona; we expanded the Executive MBA in Madrid; we increased the number of MBA students; we grew Open Programs in several countries, as well as Executive Education Custom Programs. All this has been possible thanks to the effort and enthusiasm of everyone who forms part of IESE.

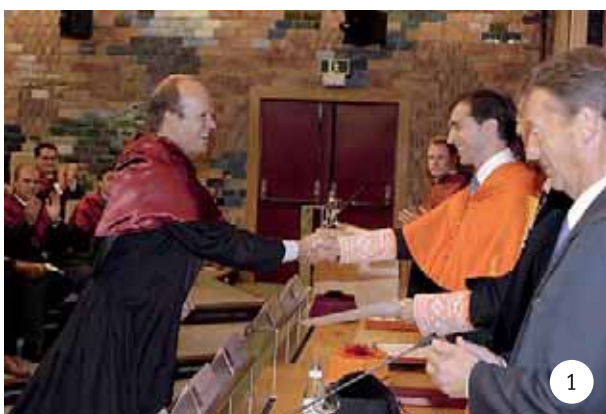
The support of alumni all over the world has been fundamental. They have wholeheartedly supported projects such as the launch of the campuses in New York and Munich. I remember that in March 2004, we organized a meeting with alumni in Munich to explain IESE's future plans in Germany. A few alumni attended that meeting. A decade later, we held the 2015 Global Alumni Reunion in Munich, which was attended by more than 1,000 alumni. Without their help, this achievement would not have been possible.

What role has Harvard Business School played in IESE's growth?

Our relationship with Harvard Business School is one of the most important aspects of IESE's development. The first dean of the school, Prof. **Antonio Valero**, and the first team of professors were clear about what IESE had to be. Harvard's reference served not only to confirm its strategy, but also to learn from the business school that has had possibly the most influence on the world over the last 50 years.

In terms of our relationship with Harvard, I would highlight some aspects that have been a clear source of inspiration for us: the professionalism and values of the faculty members who have collaborated with IESE over these 53 years of the Harvard-IESE Committee's existence; the excellence of its programs; and the teaching methodology, which is academically solid but at the same time very practical, centered on the needs of businesses and managers.

PEOPLE



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1. Graduation ceremony of the Global Executive MBA program, launched in 2001. Other programs also launched between 2001 and 2016 include the AMP Barcelona (2003), the AMP Warsaw (2006) and the Global CEO Program for China with HBS and CEIBS (2006), the EMBA on the Barcelona campus (2008) and the Global CEO Program with CEIBS and Wharton (2010).

2. In 2007, the North Campus in Barcelona was inaugurated, with the presence of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain.

3. IESE opened the doors of the New York campus in 2010. In 2012, Prince Felipe and Princess Letizia visited the campus. The school had already led the SEP New York-Miami in New York since 2010. In 2011, the AMP Media & Entertainment in New York was launched, and two years later the PLD New York.

4. Meeting of the IESE International Advisory Board (IAB). IESE's governance is supported by various advisory boards such as the IAB, the U.S. Advisory Council and the Executive Committee of the Alumni Association.

5. In 2012, the Executive MBA in Sao Paulo was launched. In the photo, a snapshot of the first graduating class of the program. IESE had already led Open Programs in Sao Paulo – such as the AMP and the PMD (launched in 2002 and 2003, respectively) – for a decade.

6 & 7. The IESE campus in Munich was inaugurated in 2015. IESE launched its first program in Germany, the AMP, in 2005; this was followed by the PMD in 2014.



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The collaboration with other business schools has undoubtedly been key in IESE's evolution. How have alliances with other schools strengthened IESE's presence?

IESE's joint programs with other schools have served to help us learn from other leading institutions in diverse parts of the world and understand how they resolve similar difficulties to those that we have in developing business leaders and executives. Collaborating with Harvard, Wharton, Stanford or MIT has allowed IESE's faculty, as well as the program teams, to work with colleagues from top-level schools. Research projects, joint programs and the generation of teaching materials and cases have been the outcome of these collaborations. Moreover, IESE professors and their colleagues at those universities have conducted joint research.

Over the last decade, IESE has made a clear commitment to internationalization. A few examples include the campuses opened in New York and Munich and the launch of the Executive MBA in Sao Paulo.

Internationalization in recent years has been a natural consequence of a process that dates back to the 1960s. This internationalization accelerated in the '80s, with the launch of the bilingual MBA and, in the '90s, with the start of international Executive Education programs.

So the spirit of globalization at IESE is not new; it's something that began many years ago and in the last few decades we have continued to develop it according to our sense of mission and service and based on two very clear criteria: how we can better serve our students and alumni all over the world and how can we better serve global companies that depend on IESE to develop their executives.

As a result, we have opened campuses in New York and Munich, fostered our presence in Brazil with the EMBA and in China with the Global CEO Programs, and launched the Africa Initiative.

Over the years we have also sought more international diversity within the faculty and staff, and among all those people who collaborate with the school. The result is that IESE is today an institution with a solid, international presence and global projection.

Just after taking over your position, the world changed with the September 11 attacks, while the dot-com bubble had burst one year before. How has IESE adapted to the new millennium?

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by three important phenomena. The first is the technological revolution, whose effects we are still finding out 16 years later, and which has prompted not only new business models, but above all, new capacities that managers need to lead business projects successfully.

Second, the acceleration and the impact of globalization on the business world and on society has meant a greater exchange of goods and services; increased human migration; and a growing volume of capital flows among countries, which was one of the triggers of the financial crisis of 2008.


The third phenomenon that marks the 21st century is a growing uncertainty, which began with the technological changes of the end of the 20th century and came to a head with the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York. This is the socio-political context that companies in the 21st century find themselves in.

The context of the company has changed radically; but what hasn't changed is that management is a matter of people. An organization is a group of people who serve customers and create economic value in the process.

To carry out this function, companies depend upon the commitment of prepared, motivated, dedicated professionals who have values such as integrity, excellence, service, honesty and cooperation. All these values are timeless and they are even more important today than they were before the technological revolution. What's more, the digital transformation has accentuated the importance of the human and ethical dimensions of the company.

But what risks do the technological revolution and globalization pose?

They both create new opportunities, but also put many companies and many jobs at risk. The responsibility of governments, companies and society as a whole is to facilitate full employment of the population. As business

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ALUMNI HAVE A KEY ROLE IN THE INTERNATIONALIZATION AND INNOVATION PROCESS AT IESE

leaders committed to the common good, we have to think about how we can improve the education system and prepare a society that is going to see many traditional jobs destroyed. We all need to think of how to improve the professional preparation of young people, and how companies and governments can adapt, enable and advance the creation of new business projects that can compensate for the decline in the number of jobs in certain sectors.

With the crisis, the social, economic and political model of Western societies has been called into question. This has led to a rise in improper business practices among some executives. What has IESE done to reverse this style of leadership?

Since 1958, IESE has believed that management is a profession that has an essential political and ethical dimension. It obviously also has an economic dimension, but fundamentally, it is oriented toward defining goals that stem from the company's long-term vision and the mission that it seeks to fulfill in society, and doing so with a team.

It's important to remember that, in this process, it is people who are behind it; they are the protagonists. And in order for people to work in an environment with maximum trust and collaboration, they need a context where the values of integrity, honesty, truth, loyalty and service to others prevail. A company is nothing but a collective project that is sustained by these values, which have Christian inspiration, but are universal.

These values have always been present at IESE and are reflected in research, teaching and programs. For example, we have offered courses centered on the ethical challenges of management and the ethical issues of certain functions within business activities. Over the years, we have delved deeply into this area and we have launched new projects that have made executives more aware of the importance of placing ethical values first in the context of the financial crisis.

The challenge of a good business leader and a good executive is to know how to apply this political philosophy and these ethical values in a context of fast change, growing globalization and uncertainty. What changes is not the nature of the work of the top management, but the practical aspects of this work and the new set of knowledge and capacities that must be developed.

What does the future hold for business schools, now that educational programs are accessible for free on the Internet?

At IESE, we have always believed that executive education is based on four pillars: knowledge, competencies, capabilities and attitudes. Online content, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which IESE participates in, can partially help transmit knowledge. In some cases, it can also serve to improve certain technical competencies. For example, recommendations can be given for leading a successful negotiation among teams from different countries. But what is clear is that neither the best MOOCs nor the best digital technology are capable of imparting knowledge for action, which is IESE's differential feature. In this action, there is a critical element, which is the development of moral virtues, particularly the virtue of prudence, which is fundamental for appropriately applying specific knowledge in a particular situation.

Moreover, MOOCs are ineffective for developing leadership capabilities. They can give general hints on how to lead in a given context, but leadership is a matter of personal practice, which is carried out at IESE through interaction with professors and students and through the case method.

Finally, a MOOC is incapable of contributing to the development of attitudes. It can pose questions but, ultimately, what affects the development of a person's attitudes is in-person experiences with others. That's why at IESE we are committed to hybrid models. At IESE, program participants always learn in-person together, even though there may be an online dimension. We launched the Global Executive MBA in 2001 and later we applied this approach in Custom Programs and Focused Programs. We continue to offer programs that improve the general management capabilities of participants, with an integrated perspective of the business that goes beyond mere technical specialization or generalized knowledge.

How would you define the main role of IESE's faculty and what challenges have arisen over the last few years?

IESE professors have always been characterized by their academic rigor, for asking "why" about business problems, and for knowing how to work rigorously with business

leaders and executives on relevant problems, and offer specific solutions.

In recent decades, faculty has become increasingly global, with professors from many countries providing a wealth of experience. Moreover, a new balance has been struck between practical relevance and the need to have a uniquely IESE approach toward questions regarding the economy, companies and their management and social challenges, among other areas. Lastly, IESE professors have a high level of professionalism, strong values, and a clear spirit of service.

What role do alumni play?

Alumni are one of the three anchors of the institution, together with its sense of mission and values, and IESE faculty and staff. Alumni are part of the foundations of the school, and this has been true since the first group of alumni, the PADE class of '59, helped create the Alumni Association a year after their graduation.

Alumni have been essential in IESE's development. Thanks to our graduates, we have been able to reach numerous countries. Many projects have emerged from the combination of IESE alumni committed to social, economic and business development in their countries and IESE's desire to help develop executives by providing its know-how. This is how IPADE in Mexico was created in 1967 and Strathmore Business School in 2006.

Alumni have a key role in the internationalization and innovation process at IESE. They have contributed ideas and contacts with companies to create cases. More importantly, they have given us moral support, and in many cases economic support, allowing us to carry out numerous projects. For example, the expansion of the campus in Madrid and the North Campus in Barcelona, or the creation of the New York and Munich campuses, would not have been possible without the support and commitment of alumni.

How is it possible to keep IESE alumni highly committed to the school?

Our alumni's relationship with IESE began when they embarked on a program on our campus. This is when a bond forms, not only with classmates in their groups and with professors, but also with everyone at IESE – from the people who are in charge of program management, to those who provide general services – such as those working in reception, the dining halls, the library and in computer support.

So the spirit of service that we foster and live at IESE is conveyed in a natural way to all students and they feel very welcome. That is where the relationship of students with the school starts. Later, we strengthen this relationship through the Alumni Association.

What alumni remember from their IESE experience is not just exceptional classes, but also this "IESE magic" that many consider has had a transformational impact on their lives.

