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Cultivating Intellectual Virtues at Universidad Austral: An Ongoing Project Aimed at Enhancing Teaching, Research, and Curricular Innovation

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This is an unpublished conference paper for the 13th Annual Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues conference at Oriel College, Oxford University, Thursday 9th – Saturday 11th January 2025.

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Cultivating Intellectual Virtues at Universidad Austral: An Ongoing Project Aimed at Enhancing Teaching, Research, and Curricular Innovation

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Abstract

A project aimed at cultivating students' intellectual character is currently underway at the Universidad Austral (Argentina); in total, this project is expected to last from 2022 to 2026. The project currently involves a core team of eight researchers alongside 130+ professors who are organized into 12 groups according to the degree programmes with which they are associated (including Medicine, Law, Engineering, Business, and Communication, among others). The project includes one year of resource preparation (2022), three years of implementation (2023-2025), and a year of piloting (2026). Throughout the first year of implementation (2023), faculty members were introduced to the theoretical and methodological framework of this project, which focuses on an approach to teaching that seeks to promote the cultivation of intellectual character among students. In 2024, professors prioritized the virtues that were associated with every degree programme included in the project and identified which subjects in the degree curriculum would be the most appropriate targets of explicit efforts to cultivate such virtues. In 2025, these professors will focus on subject curriculum design, and in 2026, the curricula designed in 2025 will be piloted. This paper presents the project planning and the strategy employed at the UA to ensure the broad involvement of university faculty. The results of the first year of implementation are also analysed. These results indicate a high degree of faculty involvement, which offers good prospects

for the subsequent implementation of this project and predicts a broad future impact on teaching.

Keywords: Higher education teaching, intellectual character, character development, teacher professional development.

1. Introduction

Throughout history, character studies and character development have received attention from scholars working in many disciplines, including religion, philosophy, folk wisdom, psychology, character development, and education (Matthews and Lerner 2024). In a very broad sense, character traits are stable dispositions that combine perception, knowledge, emotion, motivation, and action in response to the demands associated with different spheres of human life. Personal character has often been reported to include four dimensions: moral, civic, performance, and intellectual character (Baehr 2017; Park et al. 2017).

In the past decade, important initiatives have been developed with the aim of cultivating students' character in universities in the UK and the US. The following notable examples represent only some of these initiatives. Since 2012, the *Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues* at the University of Birmingham has offered significant insights into character education (Lamb and Townsend 2024). *The Oxford Character Project*, which was founded in 2014, has explored character and leadership, mainly in the context of higher education (Brooks, Brant, and Lamb 2019; Brant, Brooks, and Lamb 2022). Since 2017, Wake Forest University in the US has operated the *Leadership and Character Program*, which seeks to establish a culture that can help students develop the virtues that they need to live and lead well; this program also aims to disseminate such a culture throughout the US through the Educating Character Initiative (Lamb and Townsend 2024). Another interesting example in this regard is the University of California at Irvine, which implemented an innovative curriculum known as *Anteater Virtues* with the aim of promoting a good intellectual character among students (Pritchard 2023). A variety of further initiatives have been implemented in various countries on this foundation.

In Latin America, the Universidad Austral (UA) has been working on the project *Intellectual Virtues: Training the Future Leaders of Argentina* since 2022. This project, which is led by a core team consisting of eight researchers (including three philosophers, three psychologists, and two educators) who inspired 130+ faculty members at the UA, focuses on research, teacher professional development (TPD), and curricular reflection for teachers at the UA.

In the context of this project at the UA, the framework of virtue epistemology—which offers a fresh and renewed vision of intellectual virtues—facilitates a joint, transversal pedagogical reflection that offers insights that are relevant to all university careers and teams. In the field of TPD, teams from different degree programmes are expected to use both conceptual and practical tools to promote the cultivation of students' virtues in their classes and, in particular, to foster the development of the specific intellectual virtues that are most relevant to the graduate profile of each discipline.

Section 2 will present the theoretical framework of the UA project. This framework integrates the notion of TPD, which is drawn from the field of education, with virtue epistemology, which is rooted in the discipline of philosophy. Subsequent sections detail the planning for the project (in Section 3) and the corresponding strategy (in Section 4). Section 5 analyses the results

observed during the first year of the project's implementation, while Section 6 discusses the conclusions that can be drawn from these findings.

2. Theoretical framework

This project at the UA is based on two conceptual axes: (i) teacher professional development and (ii) teaching to develop students' intellectual virtues.

Insights drawn from education, psychology, and philosophy are combined to address the challenge of fostering intellectual excellence among students. This interdisciplinary approach has the potential to create a comprehensive vision that can significantly influence research, teaching, and curriculum design throughout the project's life. Additionally, these efforts will benefit students at UA both during and after the project, as their teachers will strive to instil in them the qualities of excellent thinkers.

2.1 Teacher professional development

University professors usually share pedagogical and professional knowledge that is specific to their academic fields within their departments. They also belong to a university that aspires to develop an ethos that can help it fulfil its mission. For these reasons, each university degree programme can be defined as a community of practice insofar as professors share professional and teaching goals, norms, and beliefs in the context of the culture that the university imprints on them in light of its pedagogical project (Wenger 2009).

Recent studies have highlighted the need for a holistic framework that takes TPD into account and acknowledges the interactive and complex nature of this practice (Sancar, Atal, and Deryakulu 2021). If the different components of this practice (e.g., institutional context, curriculum, teacher support, and student learning) are recognized, professional development can achieve the desired goals. Moreover, cooperation among all stakeholders, including relevant institutions and organizations (rather than solely the teacher community), is essential with respect to effective professional development.

Although different models of TPD have been developed (Creemers, Kyriakides, and Antoniou 2012), the knowledge that has hitherto been developed concerning successful models of teacher professionalization processes indicates that teachers should be active participants in the process of knowledge and skill acquisition. Furthermore, they must develop new beliefs regarding their practices:

> *The research findings have revealed that professional development is more effective if the teacher has an active role in constructing knowledge (teacher as action researcher), collaborates with colleagues (collective critical reflection), the content relates to, and is situated in, the daily teaching practice (emphasis on teaching skills), the content is differentiated to meet individual developmental needs (links with formative evaluation results) and the possibilities and limitations of the workplace are taken into account* (Creemers, Kyriakides, and Antoniou 2012, 51-52).

Similarly, Calvo (2015) argued that collaborative practices involve teachers' actions when they work together to develop effective learning practices, analyse the actual events that occur in classrooms, and ensure that not only their individual performance but also that of the group as a whole is successful. According to this framework, individual TPD is as important as is the establishment of a professional culture for the teaching staff associated with each degree programme.

Motivation is also crucial with respect to TPD processes (Huertas 1997). On the basis of their research on the training processes employed by educational and noneducational organizations, Gore and Mazzini (2010) reported that the drivers of action lie not in obedience but rather in people's ability to perform the actions that they view as meaningful.

Moreover, Korthagen (2016) noted that expert knowledge alone is insufficient to increase teacher enthusiasm. Instead, the roles played by teachers' thoughts, desires, and motivations, which constitute the driving force underlying professional development, are crucial. Additionally, a sense of unity and cooperation among teachers establishes a supportive work environment that naturally influences teachers' professional development (Lawrence and Chong 2010; Gallo-Fox and Scantlebury 2016).

Accordingly, this project of the UA proposes the implementation of work strategies that can promote active participation, a focus on the establishment of an institutional culture rather than individual work, and efforts to promote the intrinsic motivation of each teacher while simultaneously respecting their free decisions. On the basis of these assumptions, this project aims to provide participating faculty members with resources and proposals that can promote joint reflection among the teaching teams with the goal of cultivating intellectual virtues among students.

2.2 Teaching for intellectual virtues

Virtue epistemology has provided a fresh framework for research on intellectual virtues. It emphasizes the need to consider cognitive faculties and the virtues that perfect these faculties to account for the possibility of obtaining knowledge of the truth. Since Ernst Sosa's pioneering work (Sosa 1980), virtue epistemology has evolved significantly within philosophy over the past few decades. However, it is a research programme that includes a diversity of approaches to epistemology that can be classified into two main stances (Battaly 2019; Turri, Alfano, and Greco 2021). Virtue reliabilism holds that epistemic virtues are broadly identified with the different cognitive faculties or capacities –e.g., vision or memory– that make it possible to reliably obtain a true belief (Sosa 2007; Goldman 1986; Greco 1994). In turn, virtue responsibilism considers that intellectual virtues depend on the development of the motivation to attain truth and consist of certain dispositions that perfect the different cognitive faculties to obtain their proper ends. For responsibilists, individuals are responsible for their beliefs and should play an active role in the pursuit of knowledge (Code 1987; Montmarquet 1993; Zagzebski 1996; Roberts and Wood 2007; Battaly 2019). Thus, intellectual virtues refer to the distinctive personal qualities exhibited by excellent thinkers (Dow 2013; King 2021). These qualities include abilities, habits, or traits that are directed toward epistemic goods, such as knowledge, understanding, and truth. These cognitive excellences are essential with regard to competent and motivated learning (Baehr 2021, 4).

Among virtue epistemologists, Jason Baehr's writings are notable in light of their applications to the field of education. He identified nine key intellectual virtues and grouped them as follows on the basis of their relevance during different stages of the learning process (Baehr 2021): a) with regard to *initiating the process of learning and ensuring that this process continues to progress in the correct direction* (p. 34-39), curiosity, autonomy, and intellectual humility; b) with respect to *ensuring that the learning process remains on the right track* (p. 39-45), attentiveness, intellectual carefulness, and intellectual thoroughness; and c) with regard to *overcoming obstacles that arise during the learning process* (p. 45-50), open-mindedness, courage, and tenacity.

Universities play a pivotal role in the process of shaping students' character; thus, this responsibility should be approached critically and intentionally. Arthur (2024) argued that character development at university should extend beyond the mere acquisition of academic and social skills, as it fundamentally pertains to the kind of person that a student becomes. Indeed, Kristjánsson (2020) has proposed flourishing as an ideal for education, defining it as a freely chosen and developmentally progressive activity that is associated with a meaningful life and actualizes human capacities in a satisfactory manner.

Brant, Books, and Lamb (2022) identified compelling reasons why universities should cultivate virtue among their students with the goal of promoting their flourishing (p. 11), including students' aspirations, the public good, personal benefits, good citizenship, academic development and integrity, and professional preparation and progression. These authors also suggested seven strategies that can be employed in this context, such as habituation through practice, reflection on personal experience, engagement with virtuous exemplars, and discussions aimed at enhancing virtue literacy (pp. 115-139). In addition, they highlighted future opportunities and challenges pertaining to the implementation of character education within universities, particularly with respect to efforts to cultivate virtue through interdisciplinary approaches.

Baehr's (2021) contributions to TPD and reflections on teaching practices are relevant. He highlighted the importance of ensuring that teachers are the first to familiarize themselves with this new approach to teaching, for which purpose appropriate spaces for training, reflection, and discussion are necessary.

He also recommended that ideals that give meaning to teaching should be embraced, particularly by focusing not only on the development of intellectual virtues but also on the establishment of conditions that can support such growth. For instance, Baehr (2021, 53-69) emphasized the importance of active learning over passive engagement, prioritized depth over breadth in terms of content, and encouraged a growth mindset within the teacher–student relationship, thereby providing practical insights for educators.

In addition, Baehr (2021, 71-87) also critically examined the behaviours and attitudes that teachers frequently exhibit in the context of their relationships with students, which can provide space for or, in contrast, inhibit learning. In this regard, he emphasized the relevance of teaching postures, such as presence, humility, openness, and receptivity.

3. Project planning

The work required for this project was planned to involve three stages. First, a core team of researchers drawn from the fields of philosophy, psychology, and education devoted 2022 to the task of preparing resources for this project. Second, a three-year period of implementation among faculty members at the UA (2023-2025) is ongoing. Many teachers (130+) are involved in this second stage, in which context they are organized into 12 groups according to the degree programmes with which they are associated (including Medicine, Law, Engineering, Business, and Communication, among others). Each group is led by a key professor who is associated with each degree program. Third, 2026 will focus on pilot tests involving undergraduate courses specifically designed to cultivate intellectual virtues among students.

The preparation of resources that took place in 2022 was twofold. First, we translated into Spanish (Baehr 2022; King 2022) the books *Deep in Thought* by Jason Baehr (2021) and *The Excellent Mind* by Nathan King (2021). [1] In addition, we validated a scale that can be used to

[1] These books by Jason Baehr and Nathan King helped us recognize the importance of virtue epistemology in classroom teaching and learning. Our discussions with these authors provided us with valuable insights that we

assess virtuous intellectual character among Argentinian university students (Mesurado and Vanney 2024). Moreover, the research team also conducted a cross-sectional study that revealed a positive correlation between an intellectually virtuous character and student flourishing (Mesurado and Vanney forthcoming).

To establish a baseline level for students' intellectual character, we evaluated the levels of curiosity, intellectual autonomy, attentiveness, carefulness, open-mindedness, tenacity, courage, and intellectual humility exhibited students entering the UA at the beginning of the 2023 academic year. The most significant strengths and opportunities for improvement observed among the students who were admitted to each degree programme were obtained, and a comparative analysis of the profiles of students at the beginning of their university studies across various degree programmes was conducted. Significant differences were observed among the different undergraduate degrees. For example, students who entered the School of Biomedical Sciences and the School of Engineering exhibited higher levels of intellectual curiosity than did students who entered the School of Business Sciences, students who entered the School of Engineering exhibited higher levels of autonomy than did students who entered the School of Biomedical Sciences, etc. A report regarding these results was prepared for internal use by the university.

The project aims for the three years that are dedicated to the implementation of this project alongside faculty members are as follows:

(i) First year of implementation (2023): Communicate the intellectual virtues framework to faculty members associated with all degree programmes at the UA.

(ii) Second year of implementation (2024): Identify intellectual virtues whose development should be prioritized in each degree programme.

(iii) Third year of implementation (2025): Design ways of improving the curricula used for these subjects with the goal of offering students the opportunity to practice virtues in the classroom[2].

Finally, we plan to devote 2026 to pilot evaluations of all courses whose curricula will be designed in 2025, in which context the goal of cultivating intellectual virtue will be included explicitly in the curriculum design.

4. Project strategy

Five elements were considered with regard to the strategic design of the project.

Research at the base

While the proposal to teach in a way that can foster intellectual virtues among students is compelling in its own right, it can become even more appealing to faculty members if empirical evidence is found to support it.

The first research on intellectual virtues conducted at the UA focused on the intellectual character of interdisciplinary researchers (Vanney et al. 2023; Vanney, Mesurado, and Aguinalde Saenz 2024). This initial research focused on the intellectual virtues of professors

could use when interpreting relevant empirical results. We are very grateful for their ongoing generosity in terms of both their time and their expertise.

[2] We are very grateful to Michael Lamb and Jennifer Rothschild for their generosity in sharing the experiences of Wake Forest University. The Educating Character Initiative's faculty workshop "Character Across the Curriculum: Equipping Faculty to Design Courses for Educating Character" was incredibly inspiring for us.

and, in particular, on the virtues of interdisciplinary researchers. However, this research also quickly highlighted the importance of cultivating students' intellectual virtues through teaching.

Thus, a new objective for this research was to develop a reliable instrument that can be used to assess students' intellectual character (Mesurado and Vanney 2024). Such an instrument would allow teachers to determine whether their efforts to cultivate virtues among their students have been successful. In addition, if empirical research has demonstrated that cultivating intellectual virtues can improve students' academic engagement, personal growth, and flourishing, these results can significantly increase researchers' confidence in the belief that promoting a way of teaching that can promote the development of intellectual virtues is worthwhile. The team of researchers already demonstrated the positive correlation between a virtuous intellectual character and human flourishing (Mesurado and Vanney forthcoming). An ongoing longitudinal study is currently investigating the causal direction of such improvement[3].

For these reasons, the first step that was taken by the UA with the goal of promoting the cultivation of intellectual virtues was to deepen research on this topic. Subsequently, on the basis of the prestige of serious investigation and the results obtained from this research, we informed faculty members at UA of what it means to teach in a way that can foster intellectual virtues among students.

Teaching staff at the heart of the initiative

If an institution aspires to cultivate the intellectual character of its students, teachers should be the first individuals to be convinced of the value of cultivating students' intellectual character. They should share this educational ideal, aspire to embody intellectual virtues, and desire to promote such virtues in the classroom. To achieve these goals, the project sought to provide spaces for personal reflection and to promote the exchange of ideas among small groups of scholars teaching within the same degree programme.

In his book *Deep in Thought*, Jason Baehr (2021) argued that teachers in all subjects can foster intellectual virtues among their students while simultaneously imparting the specific content pertaining to their subject. This transformative potential of teaching is an attractive option for many faculty members, and it can encourage them to reconnect with the transcendent meaning of their teaching vocation—namely, to transform the lives of their students.

Bottom-up process: From teachers to institutional governance

Even if professors view the proposal to educate students in intellectual virtues to be attractive, it must still be validated by the faculty deans and endorsed by the university administration to ensure institutional consolidation.

A process that begins with the faculty is based on the tacit assumption that it will receive institutional backing. However, the fact that the process in question does not follow a timeline that has been proposed by the government makes it easier for its development to follow a natural evolution. The bottom-up approach offers teachers sufficient time for their decision to include virtue education among their pedagogical objectives to mature. The aim of this process is to allow professors to develop genuinely intrinsic motivation. Teachers should view the proposal not as an obligation that is added to their work commitments but rather as an opportunity to reflect, theoretically contextualize, and improve their classes by engaging in

[3] Cf. the JTF-founded project: *Is A Virtuous Intellectual Character A Cause Of Human Flourishing? An Empirical Investigation.*
https://www.templeton.org/grant/is-a-virtuous-intellectual-character-a-cause-of-human-flourishing-an-empirical-investigation

exchanges with their colleagues. The most serious threat to teachers' likelihood of continuing in the project is not a lack of interest but rather a lack of time as a result of teachers' multiple commitments. Accordingly, not only the design of these activities but also their implementation should allow the flexibility necessary to ensure that each teacher can adjust them to his or her own possibilities.

Institutional support

The previous subsection highlighted the advantages of a bottom-up process; however, institutional support is crucial with regard to efforts to enhance the effectiveness of such a process and ensure its long-term sustainability.

Institutional support ensures the following: First, (i) teachers perceive that their efforts to teach in a way that can promote intellectual virtues among their students are recognized and valued. (ii) Teachers can incorporate the cultivation of virtues that have been identified as critical with respect to the degree programmes with which they are associated into the curricula that they design. (iii) Teachers can obtain help and support from university staff (e.g., the Department of Educational Innovation can contribute to the development of didactic resources aimed at cultivating such virtues in the classroom). Finally, (iv) teachers can establish an institutional culture that promotes virtuous actions with regard to all aspects of university life (tutorials, noncurricular activities, etc.), rather than solely in the classroom.

The proposal to teach in a manner that can cultivate virtues among students is closely linked with the institutional mission of the UA. Indeed, the university's mission statement is the following:

> *Austral University aims to serve society through the pursuit of truth, by developing and transmitting knowledge, fostering virtue, and attending to each person according to their transcendent purpose, while exercising intellectual, professional, social, and public leadership.*

As a result, this proposal is currently being integrated into the university's educational model as a vital component. This approach ensures that various service areas at the UA—including the Directorate of Studies, the Directorate of Educational Innovation, the Directorate of Planning and Academic Processes, the University Life Programme, and the Directorate of Institutional Assessment and Analysis—work jointly with faculty members to achieve this objective.

Cooperation among universities

Situations involving collaboration and the exchange of experiences are significant sources of inspiration. Additionally, these collaborations and exchanges can allow teachers to save time and effort by starting work at the point where another teacher has left off. However, the fact that an initiative is successful in one institution does not imply that it can be replicated directly at another university. Generally, such an initiative must be adapted to the new institution's requirements, context, and reality. Conversely, before one attempts to replicate an initiative at another institution, it is essential for that initiative to be consolidated and to become mature within the institution from which it originated.

During the process of preparing for this project, researchers at the UA obtained valuable insights by exchanging ideas with and reading the writings of Jason Baehr (Baehr 2011, 2021), Nathan King (King 2021), Nancy Snow (Snow 2018), Cristian Miller (Miller 2018), and other researchers. In addition, the resources developed by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtue (University of Birmingham), the Oxford Character Project (University of Oxford), the Anteater Program (University of California Irvine), and the Leadership and Character Program (Wake

Forest University) also undoubtedly served as sources of inspiration for this project. On the other hand, the UA shared its experiences with several universities in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Spain, and Uruguay that were interested in learning more about this initiative.

5. The first year of project implementation

This section examines the accomplishments and challenges that were faced during the first year of project implementation, which involved professors from all undergraduate programmes at the UA (Table 1) from April 2023 to March 2024. The work process employed by the teaching teams in the proposed two training seminars is characterized, the contributions offered by the seminars by these seminars are described from the perspective of the participating faculty members, and the shared ideas and reflections that emerged through exchanges among the teaching teams are identified and analysed.

The following instruments are used as part of this investigation: (a) questionnaires that were completed by the participants after the first seminar, (b) participation in virtual forums hosted during the two seminars, and (c) responses to the reports presented by each group of teachers on the basis of their work over the course of the year.

5.1 Activities

During the first year of the implementation process, two seminars were hosted. Each seminar consisted of six asynchronous learning modules on Moodle that were followed by a one-day face-to-face workshop. For the virtual classroom activities, the teachers were divided into 12 groups according to the degree programmes with which they were associated. All the participants in the final workshops exchanged their experiences among the groups.

The first seminar, which was titled "Knowledge and Truth," was hosted between April and August 2023[4]. The objectives of this seminar were (a) to present the state of the art of research on this topic, (b) to analyse the philosophical-cultural context of virtue epistemology, and (c) to facilitate exchanges that could allow participants to analyse the impact of this approach on teaching work at the university.

The second seminar, which was titled "Teaching to Think in Depth," was hosted between August and November 2023. Its objective was to encourage participants to reflect on what is meant by the notion of *teaching for intellectual virtues*, particularly with respect to the ideals, principles, positions, and language that are involved in this kind of teaching (Baehr, 2021).

5.2 Participants

The first year of implementation extended from April 2023 to March 2024. One hundred twenty-nine faculty members from all undergraduate degrees at the UA completed the two seminars. These faculty members were divided into 12 groups according to degree programmes with which they were associated. Each group was coordinated by a professor (Table 1). Face–to-face meetings were hosted in August 2023 and March 2024 to allow teaching teams to share their group work reports.

[4] Although the 2nd seminar was scheduled to end in December 2023, the classrooms used for both seminars remained open until February 2024 with the goal of enabling individuals who were unable to complete the course in the planned time to reach completion.

Table 1.

Membership and the number of teachers participating in the training process

Faculty or school	Degree programmes that participated in the group	Number of participating teachers
Government	BA in Political Science, BA in International Relations	11
Communication	BA in Communication, BA in Design, BA in Marketing with a Design Orientation	14
Biomedical Sciences 1	Nutrition, Nursing	9
Biomedical Sciences 2	Medicine	8
Psychology	Psychology	9
Engineering	Industrial Engineering, Computer Engineering, Bioengineering	12
Business Sciences (Bs. As.)	Business Administration, Public Accountant, Business Economics	12
Business Sciences (Rosario)	Business Administration, Public Accountant, Business Economics	18
Law	Advocacy	10
Business School	MBA, Executive Education (Targeted and Tailored Programmes).	12
Family Sciences	BA in Science for Family, BA in Family Counselling	8
Education	BA in Educational Organization and Management	6
Total Participants		129

5.3 Results

As mentioned, the activities that took place during this first year were characterized by teamwork on the basis of degree programmes. The genuine intrinsic motivation exhibited by faculty members helped them overcome any difficulties that arose.

Some groups struggled to coordinate and arrange their time, whereas others adapted flexibly and encouraged collaborative work. The division of the team into subgroups was one strategy that several groups used to advance the work on this project.

In all cases, the teams combined individual work with group meetings (whether face-to-face or virtual). Teachers reported that these meetings facilitated a more enriching exchange of topics. However, the difficulty associated with coordinating meeting times entailed that most interactions were asynchronous. One exception was the business school group, whose sessions were always face-to-face and held every two weeks over the course of the year.

Despite the limited availability of time, some teams highlighted the flexibility and possibility of adapting work times, indicating that this flexibility allowed participants to adjust their schedules and advance their understanding of different topics progressively. In all cases, the teams highlighted the difficulties that they encountered with regard to completing the work in the allotted time. For example, the final report written by the participants from the School of Communication contained the following:

> The simultaneity of the participants was variable: some managed to achieve the objectives in 2023, while many completed the virtual seminar in February or March 2024.

5.3.1 Contributions of the 1st seminar from the perspective of the participating teachers

The participants were enthusiastic with regard to the possibility of interacting with other teachers and applying intellectual virtues in the context of teaching. Some participants shared their interest in constructing a society that was more committed to truth and dialogue.

At the end of the first seminar, participants completed a questionnaire, which was provided via the virtual classroom on Moodle, in which context faculty members indicated that their involvement had positive outcomes. Many participants noted that the seminar had exceeded their initial expectations. They also indicated their desire to deepen their understanding and apply the knowledge they obtained through their participation to their personal and academic lives. The participants were enthusiastic with respect to the opportunity to interact with other teachers as well as the possibility of cultivating intellectual virtues as part of their teaching practices. Some participants highlighted their interest in the possibility of contributing to the project of developing a society that was more committed to truth and dialogue.

Despite their initial doubts, most professors were motivated and prepared to apply the teachings of this seminar in their own classrooms, thus highlighting the positive impact of the seminar on their personal and professional development. Most teachers particularly appreciated the closing lectures of the seminar: “Teaching for Intellectual Virtues” by Jason Baehr and “Intellectual Virtues for Everyday Life” by Nathan King (i.e., the authors of the books that were analysed during the course).

The following are examples of insightful comments made by the participating teachers:

> I am more aware of its relevance and motivated to continue deeper, with the expectation and hope of being able to be "down to Earth" in terms of what has been assimilated and of

> producing a more enriching teaching experience for the students.
>
> I hope to apply and continue to deepen my understanding of philosophical texts that can allow me to think more critically and help me follow a line of philosophical thought that can be reflected in all areas of my work (teaching, tutoring, management, and research).
>
> I still have doubts about how to defend the existence of some "truth" in front of someone who is sceptical. Still, I am also taking away many reflections and attitudes that I can put into practice to generate honest, deep, and quality debates (both in my classroom and in everyday life).
>
> The seminar lectures gave me concrete examples of how to incorporate the learning of intellectual virtues into the classroom and how they are present in and enrich our day-to-day lives.

5.3.2 Participation in virtual forums during both seminars

With respect to their participation in seminar forums associated with each session of the virtual classroom on Moodle, faculty members reported that the cultivation of intellectual virtues represents a relevant contribution to university education and the integral formation of students. According to this analysis, the following issues can be highlighted: (i) intellectual virtues, (ii) teaching and research, and (iii) seminar evaluation.

Intellectual virtues

The participants highlighted the importance and originality of efforts to address intellectual virtues in university education. They indicated that this subject is novel and superior to other proposals regarding students' integral development or flourishing.

The participants mentioned the relationship between intellectual virtues and students' integral development. They highlighted the importance of developing positive intellectual habits to enable students to reflect, choose the truth, and transfer the knowledge that they have acquired to various fields.

For example, one of the participants made the following comments:

> The topic addressed in the seminar is, without a doubt, new in education in general and in university education in particular, even more so in the context of our country, in which other perspectives that allude to the integral character that is so desired in the teaching and learning process (including education in values, emotional education, socioemotional education, comprehensive sexual education, and education for citizenship) predominate, but in my opinion, they are reductionist by promoting only the regulation of affect and emotions or the acquisition of external norms.

Teaching and research

The participants also considered the need to apply the notion of intellectual virtues to both the classroom and their research since they valued the possibility of teaching with the explicit goal of developing intellectual virtues. They also reported that the proposal offered them resources that they could use to develop their personal and professional reflections as well as their teaching. Moreover, they established connections between university teaching and interdisciplinary research, and they highlighted the importance of intellectual virtues in these contexts.

As one example among many, one participant made the following comments on one of the seminar's forums:

> I want to emphasize that this seminar—I understand it that way—has been a space for reflection in our educational practice as teachers. Everything we have gone through and received through the different modules on intellectual virtues has enabled us to exchange

> ideas that have helped us analyse the impact these ideas can have on our work at the university.

Evaluation of the seminar and training

At the end of the second seminar, an evaluation form was provided to participants to collect feedback. They expressed their gratitude for and positive evaluations of the course, the training they received, and their interactions with their colleagues. They also emphasized the need to take concrete actions to apply the concepts they had learned to their teaching practice.

For example, one participant made the following comments:

> (...) I greatly value the training I received in this learning space; the topics worked with an interdisciplinary approach through the intervention of teachers with a lot of training and experience in different areas; the opportunity to engage in dialogue with other colleagues and put into practice the "bottom-up" strategy referred to by Jason Baehr (2023); and, finally, the possibility of verifying the convergence among authors with different epistemological approaches (Baehr 2023; Berkowitz 2021; Arthur and Kristjánsson 2022) to the principles that should be considered in the process of teaching virtues.

5.3.3 Reports presented by teaching teams regarding their work over the course of the year

At the end of 2023, each group prepared a report on its work over the course of the year. The experiences of each team were shared among the groups through formal group presentations at the second workshop, which was hosted in March 2024.

Each team's report was organized in line with the information requested by the project coordinator. These reports were supposed to contain (a) the challenges involved in educating students in the current context; (b) a review of the curricula used for the team's subject in relation to the educational ideals proposed by Baehr (2022) as well as an analysis of potential adjustments; (c) outstanding virtues pertaining to each degree programme on the basis of the expected graduate profile; (d) personal, institutional, or contextual obstacles that threaten the possibility of implementing the principles or the teaching postures that are stipulated by the theoretical framework; and finally, (e) valuable ideas that emerged from this process for the degree teaching team.

Challenges in the process of educating students in the current context

Faculty members agreed that they encountered significant challenges in work with their students due to deficiencies in students' basic reading comprehension and writing skills as well as in their basic knowledge of history. Professors at the School of Business Sciences identified these challenges as possible consequences of the shift to virtual high school studies due to the pandemic. An additional challenge identified in this context was related to the distracting impact of technology and an insistence on seeking practical knowledge over theoretical and foundational knowledge. Many participants reported that their students have fragile attention spans and an addiction to technology that takes time away from learning. For example, teachers from the School of Law mentioned two negative implications of the amount of time that students spent using screens: short-termism and insufficient time to study. In addition, teachers from the field of Political Science noted that the kind of evaluation used in high school education, which is based on group assignments, is not conducive to success in the context of university evaluations, in which individual performances are also assessed.

Teachers also mentioned the difficulties that students encounter with regard to concentrating and paying attention as well as the fact that students exhibit a certain level of apathy alongside

a lack of commitment to knowledge, which can impact the depth of their learning. Immediacy was identified as a generational characteristic that involves a tendency to prioritize results over reflection, and participants also focused on the need for higher levels of tenacity among students if they are to sustain long-term effort. In this sense, teachers associated with the Nutrition and Nursing degrees identified immediacy as a generational characteristic that prioritizes results over reflection and is accompanied by a lack of the tenacity necessary to sustain effort over time.

The notions of learning to teach and teaching to learn were emphasized, especially when students faced numerous distractions that hindered their learning process. A challenge that emerges in this context pertains to the need to elicit curiosity, open-mindedness, and intellectual humility among students to ensure that they are motivated to learn.

The overabundance of online information requires students to develop discernment skills and to use information ethically. In addition, the need for constant adaptability on the part of teachers was highlighted, as was the need for more attractive and effective pedagogical strategies that can engage students in the educational process.

The participants also highlighted the need to identify appropriate pedagogical strategies that can be used to foster critical thinking, curiosity, and other intellectual virtues among students in a constantly changing educational environment.

Notably, the challenges identified in this context included the working conditions faced by faculty members. Namely, multiple responsibilities, low pay, and a lack of resources can make it challenging for participants to deepen their academic vocation and research. Despite these difficulties, the value of the effort and passion for teaching exhibited by these teachers were evident. While this point was emphasised by the group of medical teachers in particular, it can be extended to the rest of the teams.

In summary, teaching teams associated with different degree programmes were able to reach a consensus regarding their diagnosis of students entering university. These teams identified a lack of basic skills and/or a lack of intrinsic interest in knowledge on the part of these students. Moreover, they highlighted the need to make adaptations and adjustments to themselves as teachers with the goal of impacting the education of their students more profoundly.

Review of the curricula used for subject teaching in light of the educational ideals proposed as well as an analysis of potential adjustments

One of the activities included in the seminars involved inviting teachers to review the curricula for the specific courses that they teach (in terms of objectives, contents, activities, and types of evaluation) with the aims of identifying which educational ideals (e.g., academic, sociopolitical, economic and professional ideals as well as those regarding the need to educate students in terms of virtues) were more explicitly included in such curricula and determining whether some ideals predominate over others. The participants were also invited to consider whether they believed that it would be advisable to make any changes in these curricula.

The analysis revealed that, in general, the political and economic dimensions should be addressed in these curricula more frequently as ideals pertaining to education. Namely, these dimensions tend to feature a stronger emphasis on academic ideals and professional development. For example, in the field of nursing and nutrition, teachers reported that academic ideals were predominant in the relevant curricula. However, they agreed with the claim that social and professional ideals were implicit in these curricula to some extent, although these ideals were not evaluated in this context. Similarly, psychology professors recognized various

educational ideals in the curricula used in their field, and they highlighted the need to make intellectual virtues more explicit and develop practical activities that can promote such virtues.

In summary, the participants affirmed that attention to academic and professional ideals was present in all degree programmes. However, the emphasis of such attention differed according to the type of degree in question and the profiles of the graduates. In some cases, professors argued that although the development of a virtuous intellectual character was not explicitly included in the curricula, such a character was cultivated indirectly in the classroom and through interactions with students. Seven groups also reported that they would adjust the curricula to incorporate intellectual character development explicitly, while others mentioned an interest in integrating the language of intellectual virtues into the classroom, and another group even expressed their desire to evaluate the development of such a programme.

Outstanding virtues pertaining to each degree programme according to the expected graduate profile

Each group of faculty members highlighted different virtues that they viewed as essential with respect to the academic and professional development of their students. These virtues reflected the various demands and approaches associated with each area of study. Table 2 presents the virtues that were mentioned as priorities in this context as well as those that were identified as relevant.

Table 2.

Virtues that were identified as priorities for students' development in each degree programme

Faculty or group of related degree programmes	Priority virtue	Other outstanding virtues
School of Government	Open-mindedness	Autonomy, Attentiveness, Tenacity
School of Communication	Curiosity	Autonomy, Tenacity, Carefulness, Thoroughness
Nutrition and Nursing	Curiosity	Open-mindedness, Autonomy, Carefulness, Tenacity, Humility
School of Medicine	Carefulness	Humility, Courage, Tenacity, Thoroughness
School of Psychology	Carefulness, Autonomy, Curiosity, Open-mindedness	-
School of Business Sciences	Curiosity	Humility, Open-mindedness, Carefulness, Thoroughness
School of Law	Open-mindedness	Carefulness, Autonomy, Critical Thinking, Thoroughness
School of Engineering	Curiosity, Tenacity	Humility, Thoroughness, Attentiveness
Business School	Open-mindedness, Carefulness	Humility, Curiosity, Attentiveness, Intellectual Charity
Family Sciences	Humility	Carefulness, Thoroughness, Open-mindedness, Judgement
School of Education	Humility, Curiosity, Tenacity	Prudence, Carefulness

Personal, institutional, or contextual obstacles that threaten the possibility of implementing the principles and the teaching postures that are stipulated by the theoretical framework

Despite the differences among various disciplines and approaches, many of the challenges mentioned in this context were similar: managing time, encouraging active student participation, resolving the tension between covering a wide range of topics and fostering deep learning in programme delivery, and maintaining a consistent understanding as well as a humble and open posture as teachers.

For example, in the School of Medicine, professors reported that more time is needed to teach the contents associated with each subject. This requirement leads to a failure to encourage student participation and avoid disorder with the goal of progressing through the development of the subjects in question more quickly. In the School of Business Studies, teachers highlighted the importance of ensuring a match between teachers' expectations of students and the beliefs of the latter regarding teachers' expectations of them. In turn, law teachers shared their concerns regarding the tension between the tasks they must fulfil with respect to management, teaching, and research. In the field of education, teachers also identified the belief that the teacher is "all-knowing" as an obstacle to progress in the implementation of the ideas of the theoretical framework.

Valuable ideas for the degree teaching team that emerged from this process

All the groups, which were divided on the basis of the different degree programmes with which participants were associated, recognized the importance of promoting intellectual virtues among students, described the achievements and difficulties associated with this process among teachers, and proposed specific actions that could be taken to ensure continuity with respect to the work associated with this project.

All the participants recognized the relevance of integrating intellectual virtues into student education, as they viewed such virtues as crucial with regard to students' integral development and their ability to face the challenges associated with the contemporary world. All the groups also reached a consensus regarding the need for (i) deeper reflection on intellectual character, (ii) efforts to foster dialogue between students and teachers regarding intellectual virtues, (iii) explorations of ways in which this content can be applied practically in the context of teaching, and (iv) the implementation of appropriate assessment strategies. Moreover, most groups highlighted the importance of teachers' commitment to the goal of developing intellectual virtues in their teaching practice, including in terms of their own personal growth. Notably, the ability of teachers to serve as models and exemplars was identified as essential with respect to students' ability to acquire virtues.

However, the groups that were established on the basis of the different degrees offered diverse suggestions regarding ways of cultivating intellectual virtues among students. For example, while in the field medicine, the importance of cultivating the intellectual virtues that are required for case analysis and clinical practice was emphasized, in the context of engineering, the importance of virtues that could enhance teamwork and enable students to engage in more profound exchanges of ideas was highlighted. In the field of nursing and nutrition, participants proposed that all professors should receive transversal pedagogical training that could enable them to develop students' intellectual virtues through their teaching. Finally, in the School of Business Sciences, participants suggested that the current process should be perpetuated by helping promote concrete actions that can facilitate the integration of practice in various virtues into the corresponding teaching practices.

Different groups also identified various challenges that they encountered in the task of integrating intellectual virtues into their teaching practices. For example, participants from the School of Business mentioned the excessive use of technological resources and social networks as one such challenge. Similarly, participants from the School of Engineering highlighted the

need to identify and reach a consensus regarding the virtues that are most relevant to cultivate at each stage of the university career.

6. Conclusions

This paper sought to document the research process and the collaborative development of a strategic vision by faculty members at the UA with the goal of promoting intellectual virtues among students. It also highlighted the significant accomplishments and challenges that emerged during the crucial first year of the project´s implementation, particularly since during this year, it was possible to determine whether faculty were engaged in the process of educating students in intellectual virtues.

The results obtained thus far reveal the deep commitment of the teaching teams to the reflective process, which is in line with the proposed theoretical framework. One of the most significant results presented here pertained to the enthusiasm, receptivity, and willingness of the 130+ faculty members who participated in this project with regard to the application of the knowledge they acquired in this context to their teaching practices. In this sense, all the groups of teachers who participated in this project highlighted the relevance of addressing intellectual virtues as part of the educational process, with the aim of both adapting teaching to a complex and constantly changing educational context and encouraging students to think deeply and develop critical thinking skills.

One notable aspect that was identified during the first year of project implementation pertained to comprehensive approach of the actions taken in this project, which placed teachers at the heart of the project, thus inviting them to participate voluntarily in this process. This strategy may have enhanced the commitment of the teaching teams since, without the obligation to participate in the seminars, professors from different degree programmes were able to advance at their own pace and according to their own possibilities by completing tasks and engaging in joint reflections on the possibility of integrating the cultivation of intellectual virtues into their teaching practices.

However, several obstacles and challenges have also been identified that require attention. On the one hand, the need to devote more time to planning pertaining to teaching and reflection with others in a context featuring multitasking—the proliferation of roles and responsibilities, research demands, etc.—which is not conducive to such a process—places teachers on a path that requires constant effort. This path can often undermines the possibility of introducing innovations in teaching. On the other hand, the tension observed between breadth and depth in the context of subject teaching makes it seem impossible to add more educational content to participants' classes.

Notably, all the teachers who participated in this project highlighted the need to develop intellectual virtues, albeit with different nuances depending on the degree programmes with which they were associated and students' different stages of learning. The ideas and proposals shared by individuals associated with each department or degree programme offer a starting point for continued efforts to implement the principles and postures proposed in the theoretical framework with a focus on promoting *teaching for intellectual virtues* (Baehr 2021).

As Brooks, Lamb & Brant (2022) asserted, the formation of intellectual character is possible at university despite the presence of genuine challenges and difficulties. When this task is accomplished in a critical, intentional, and practical manner, universities can play a vital role in the process of helping students become more virtuous in ways that can promote their flourishing as well as the flourishing of their communities. The processes and results achieved in this project at the UA provide the university with the encouragement necessary to proceed

to subsequent stages of the project, which focus on enhancing teaching, research, and curricular innovation in a transversal manner across all the degree programmes at the UA through the cultivation of intellectual virtues.

Finally, on an even more important note, through this project, a renewed educational ideal is emerging from the work of faculty members at the UA, which aims to prepare the leaders that society needs more effectively. This ideal requires the faculty members to accompany students and encourage them to (i) be protagonists of a personal project, base their own lives on deep convictions, reflect on the motivations underlying their actions and feelings, discover their talents with gratitude and know how to use them in the service of others; (ii) be interested in lifelong learning, develop their own opinions, ask thoughtful questions, learn from others, listen fairly to opposing views and defend their ideas; and (iii) be able to adapt to circumstances, times and people as well as to work in different situations while recognizing diverse approaches and exhibiting a hopeful and active attitude. In other words, this project aims to develop the qualities of good leaders. That is, it encourages students to think deeply, build their confidence, empower others, and persevere despite difficulties.

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