

Costa Rica

National Higher Education Equity Policy

Governance

The public Higher Education institutions are completely independent and autonomous. The first four Costa Rican universities are in charge of the higher education public policy, as determined by the Political Constitution in Article 84. They coordinate their activities through the National Council of Rectors (CONARE). The Office of Higher Education Planning (OPES) within the Ministry of Education is its Executive Secretariat.

The Higher Education Council (CSE) regulates access to higher education according to Law 6541.

The National Council for Private University Higher Education (CONESUP), is attached to the Ministry of Education and is responsible for regulating and supervising Private Universities. It is formed by the Minister of Education, CONARE, private universities, professional associations and the Ministry of Planning.

Higher Education Policy Documents

- National Development Plan PND 2015-2018 Chapter 5, section 5.4
- National Plan for Higher Education for State University PLANES 2016-2020 CONARE
- OPES, 2016.
- *Five-Year University Indigenous Peoples Plan (PPIQ)* October 2013
- Higher Education Improvement Project with character of Law (9144), dated November 6, 2012 (BIRF Loan No. 8194-CR).

Equity Policy Documents

What broad and specific equity objectives do the policy documents identify?

- To provide an adequate environment and conditions that enable the expansion of access, retention, and academic success, as well as support for integral personal development, with particular attention to vulnerable populations.
- To improve access and quality for vulnerable populations, increasing scholarship and student services programs.

- To increase access of indigenous students to public universities.
- To generate processes that help indigenous students to succeed and complete their programs in public universities.
- To implement equity principles in admissions and academic programs that favor the origin and identity of indigenous students.
- To provide scholarships to people in vulnerable conditions.
- To provide student loans and grants to technical and professional students from remote areas.

The following groups are identified and clearly included in the policy documents

- Low income students
- Students from underdeveloped regions
- Indigenous students
- Students with special educational needs

Does the country have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups?

- Promote strategies to increase access to higher education by students from public secondary schools belonging to the 25% schools with the lower proportion of students acceding to higher education.
- Establish new mechanisms in the admission and retention process for the most vulnerable population.
- Increase the percentage of students enrolled from vulnerable zones from 76% (2013) to 81% in 2018
- Increase the number of scholarship for students in vulnerable condition: 40 per year from 2015 to 2018.
- Increase the number of loans granted to students from less developed areas from 11,586 (2015) to 16,192 in 2018

Is there a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education?

Costa Rica does not have a standalone higher education equity promotion policy document. The Five-Year Indigenous Peoples Plan (PPIQ) of October 2013 focuses on a specific target group. All other documents are general for higher education and include equity policy approaches.

Costa Rica has a number of specific anti-discrimination provisions embedded in the following pieces of legislation:

- Law 4230 of 1968 Against Racial Discrimination.
- Decree 38,999 of May 2015 Against Sexual Discrimination.

The Government of Costa Rica uses a series of financial and non-monetary instruments to promote equity.

Financial Policy Instruments

- Scholarship and subsidized student services.

Non-Monetary Policy Instruments

- There are no national admission tests to higher education. Incoming students are selected on the basis of their high school grades.
- The universities reach out to those not selected within 15% of the minimum score and offer them a second chance through the Deferred Admission scheme.
- Strategies to improve the transfer of secondary education students to higher education of the schools with transfer rates lower than 25%.
- Teacher training in indigenous territories.
- Positive discrimination for people from underdeveloped and indigenous areas.
- Retention programs improving academic and social environment.
- The ITCR has a first-year vice-rector responsible for organizing specialized support for first-year students experiencing academic difficulties.
- The UNA has a counseling program to support students to enroll in the career pathway of their preference and to include students in academic collaboration activities.

- The UNED promotes an advising program and leads mental health and academic workshops.
- The UCR has the Center for Counseling and Services for Students with Disabilities (CASED).

Financial Resources

- Public expenditure on higher education as a percentage of GDP in 2015: 1.58%
- In 2015, Costa Rica recorded \$2.1 million of spending on higher education and 3.2% of that amount was dedicated to scholarships and equity related support. The goal for 2020 is to increase this percentage by two additional points.
- For the 2015 quinquennium, universities allocated a total of US\$ 214,000 to attend the indigenous population, which would correspond to 4.7% of the total investment in higher education for that year.

Quality assurance

The quality assurance criteria consider the following equity elements:

- Access to a career or program must be promoted equally, without discrimination and with respect for diversity.
- Distribution of students admitted in the last four years according to sex, nationality, age, disability status if presented, and educational institution of origin.
- Description of the conditions of the infrastructure, materials, equipment and human resources that allow access and equal opportunities.
- The infrastructure must comply with the provisions of the regulations for the construction or qualification of educational buildings; in particular, it must comply with everything established in the Building Regulations of Law No. 4240 of November 15, 1968 and as mandated by the Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Annual State of Education Reports examines whether the population has an equitable access to a quality education that promotes the development of

capabilities of people to perform independently and contribute to the welfare of society.

The National Technical University (UTN) has an observatory on equity in higher education which monitors and promotes research and public debates on equity and inclusion in higher education.

A series of indicators examine the conditions of different vulnerable populations, due to their socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, disability, place of origin or others and their access to opportunities offered by universities to integrate and develop successfully.

Dedicated Equity Promotion Agency

There is no specialized agency on the subject.

The Observatory on Equity of the National Technical University is an entity in charge of promoting the analysis and construction of knowledge based on reliable, meaningful and up-to-date information on equity in higher education, with the purpose of strengthening the inclusion in the universities.

Key Indicators of Equity in Costa Rica

Net Enrollment Rate by Gender, Income Quintiles and Region

Year	Total	Gender		Income Quintiles					Area	
		Female	Male	1	2	3	4	5	Rural	Urban
2010	21,4	23,7	19,0	4,1	8,5	15,3	26,7	51,7	12,8	26,5
2010	21,4	23,7	19,0	3,4	8,1	16,1	29,3	55,5	12,8	26,5
2011	23,3	27,4	19,3	5,5	12,6	17,4	29,3	59,4	13,5	29,4
2012	24,7	27,8	21,9	7,7	12,4	17,7	32,4	60,2	14,6	31,3
2013	23,9	26,2	21,8	8,0	11,6	18,1	29,2	66,7	14,5	30,2
2014	24,9	29,1	20,9	8,6	12,1	19,5	36,7	62,6	13,0	29,6
2015	24,1	28,7	19,5	4,5	11,4	20,0	32,3	67,5	13,2	28,3
2016	25,0	28,7	21,5	7,6	12,6	20,9	31,7	62,8	14,7	29,0
2017	23,8	29,5	18,8	6,6	14,4	20,0	28,1	60,3	16,8	26,4

Source: SEDLAC (CEDLAS and World Bank), May 2018

Sources

<http://www.cedlas.econo.unlp.ed.ar/wp/en/estadisticas/sedlac/estadisticas/>

<https://www.mep.go.cr;>

[http://www.cse.go.cr/;](http://www.cse.go.cr/)

<https://www.conare.ac.cr/conare/que-es-conare>

National Plan for Higher Education for the State University 2016-2020

Development Plan 2015-2018 MIDEPLAN

Five-Year and Inter-University Indigenous Peoples Plan "(PPIQ)

<http://www.utn.ac.cr/content/observatorio-sobre-equidad-en-la-educaci%C3%B3n-superior>

Evaluation Report of the BIRF Project Improvement of Higher Education PMES 2015

http://app.redindices.org/ui/v3/bycountry.html?country=CR&subfamily=ESUP_FIN&family=ESUP&start_year=2010&end_year=2016

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