



*Routledge Research in Higher Education*

# **HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE REPRESSION, AND NEOLIBERAL REFORM IN NICARAGUA**

**REFLECTIONS FROM A UNIVERSITY UNDER FIRE**

Edited by  
Wendi Bellanger, Serena Cosgrove  
and Irina Carlota Silber



# HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE REPRESSION, AND NEOLIBERAL REFORM IN NICARAGUA

This innovative volume makes a key contribution to debates around the role of the university as a space of resistance by highlighting the liberatory practices undertaken to oppose dual pressures of state repression and neoliberal reform at the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in Nicaragua.

Using a critical ethnographic approach to frame the experiences of faculty and students through vignettes, chapters present contextualized, analytical contributions from students, scholars, and university leaders to draw attention to the activism present within teaching, research, and administration while simultaneously calling attention to critical higher education and international solidarity as crucial means of maintaining academic freedom, university autonomy, oppositional knowledge production, and social outreach in higher education globally.

This text will benefit researchers, students, and academics in the fields of higher education, educational policy and politics, and international and comparative education. Those interested in equality and human rights, Central America, and the themes of revolution and protest more broadly will also benefit from this volume.

**Wendi Bellanger** is Provost and Academic Leader of the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), Nicaragua.

**Serena Cosgrove** is Faculty Coordinator of Seattle University's Central America Initiative and Associate Professor in International Studies at Seattle University, USA.

**Irina Carlota Silber** is Professor of Anthropology at the City College of New York, USA.

## **Routledge Research in Higher Education**

### **A Philosophical Approach to Perceptions of Academic Writing Practices in Higher Education**

Through a Glass Darkly

*Amanda French*

### **Title IX and the Protection of Pregnant and Parenting College Students**

Identifying Effective Communication and Support Practices

*Catherine L. Riley, Alexis Hutchinson, and Carley Dix*

### **Higher Education, State Repression, and Neoliberal Reform in Nicaragua**

Reflections from a University under Fire

*Edited by Wendi Bellanger, Serena Cosgrove, and Irina Carlota Silber*

### **The Past, Present, and Future of Higher Education in the Arabian Gulf Region**

Critical Comparative Perspectives in a Neoliberal Era

*Edited by Awad Ibrahim and Osman Z. Barnawi*

### **Students' Experiences of Psychosocial Problems in Higher Education**

Battling and Belonging

*Edited by Trine Wulf-Andersen, Lene Larsen, Annie Aarup Jensen, Lone Krogh, Aske Basselbjerg Stigemo, and Mathias Hulgård Kristiansen*

### **Dismantling Constructs of Whiteness in Higher Education**

Narratives of Resistance from the Academy

*Edited by Teresa Y. Neely and Margie Montañez*

For more information about this series, please visit: [www.routledge.com/Routledge-Research-in-Higher-Education/book-series/RRHE](http://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Research-in-Higher-Education/book-series/RRHE)

# HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE REPRESSION, AND NEOLIBERAL REFORM IN NICARAGUA

Reflections from a University  
under Fire

*Edited by Wendi Bellanger, Serena Cosgrove  
and Irina Carlota Silber*

First published 2023  
by Routledge  
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge  
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2023 selection and editorial matter, Wendi Bellanger, Serena Cosgrove, and Irina Carlota Silber; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Wendi Bellanger, Serena Cosgrove, and Irina Carlota Silber to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Bellanger, Wendi, editor. | Cosgrove, Serena, 1963– editor. | Silber, Irina Carlota, 1968– editor.

Title: Higher education, state repression, and neoliberal reform in Nicaragua : reflections from a university under fire / Edited by Wendi Bellanger, Serena Cosgrove, and Irina Carlota Silber.

Description: New York, NY : Routledge, 2023. | Series: Routledge research in higher education | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022006567 | ISBN 9781032057316 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032057330 (paperback) | ISBN 9781003198925 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Education, Higher--Nicaragua. | Educational change--Nicaragua. | Education and state--Nicaragua. | Educational equalization--Nicaragua. | Neoliberalism--Nicaragua.

Classification: LCC LA463 .H54 2023 | DDC 378.7285--dc23/eng/20220516

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022006567>

ISBN: 978-1-032-05731-6 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-05733-0 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-19892-5 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003198925

Typeset in Bembo  
by SPi Technologies India Pvt Ltd (Straive)

**We dedicate this book to Nicaraguan students and their families and their belief in the power of a transformative education. All royalties from sales of this book will support scholarships for low-income, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant Nicaraguan college students.**

# MAP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NICARAGUA

---



Image by: Luis Harold Mendieta

# CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>Foreword by Florence E. Babb</i>	x
<i>About the Editors and Contributors</i>	xvi
<i>A Timeline for University Autonomy in Nicaragua by Hallie S. Evans</i>	xviii
Introduction	1
<i>Wendi Bellanger, Serena Cosgrove and Irina Carlota Silber</i>	

## PART 1

### **The Repressive and Neoliberal Context of Critical Higher Education in Nicaragua** 19

- 1 The Manifesto of the Universidad Centroamericana  
in Managua, Nicaragua 21  
*José (Chepe) Idiáquez, S.J.*
- 2 The Impact of Neoliberal Reform and Repression on Higher  
Education in Nicaragua 38  
*Wendi Bellanger*



<b>PART 2</b>	
<b>Professors and Students under Fire</b>	<b>61</b>
3 Professors and the Accompaniment of University Student Struggles in Nicaragua <i>Karla Lara</i>	63
4 An Ethnography of the Classroom and the Daily Effects of Repression <i>Arquímedes González</i>	80
5 Rhizomatic Solidarity for (Re)flourishing: UCA Graduate Perspectives on Education, Social Change, and Persistence Amid Repression <i>Fiore Bran Aragón</i>	93
<b>PART 3</b>	
<b>Solidarity and Implications beyond Nicaragua</b>	<b>117</b>
6 Cyborg Solidarity with Nicaragua and Digital/Analogue Entanglements <i>Andrew Gorvetzian</i>	119
7 University Partnerships and Solidarity 3.0 with Nicaragua <i>Serena Cosgrove</i>	137
8 Lessons from Nicaragua for a Critical Higher Education <i>Irina Carlota Silber</i>	158
<b>PART 4</b>	
<b>Coda</b>	<b>169</b>
9 A Brief History of Violence in Nicaragua <i>James Quesada</i>	171
<i>Index</i>	<i>189</i>

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the organizations who have supported this research, including the Wenner-Gren Foundation and Seattle University's Central America Initiative, as well as our universities: the Universidad Centroamericana, Seattle University, the City College of New York, the University of New Mexico, and San Francisco State University.

We extend deep gratitude to the anonymous external reviewers whose support and feedback provided important signposts for the project. Ultimately, however, we authors are responsible for the content of this book and any errors that it may contain. We are aware that our scholarship rides on the shoulders of other scholars throughout the Americas and beyond whose research questions, data, and analysis have encouraged us to ask our questions and contribute to our ethnographic exploration of a university under fire.

Each author extends gratitude to their colleagues, friends, and families who have supported this intergenerational, intercultural, and international project.

# FOREWORD

*by Florence E. Babb*

At its core, this volume highlights two related urgencies: higher education under crushing neoliberal constraints, and one embattled Central American university—the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in Managua, Nicaragua—that is caught up in national political conflict and state repression that threatens its long-established autonomy and academic freedom. The editors and contributors take up questions of abiding concern, and in so doing, they show us why we need to become aware of and respond to the struggles of these educators and students in the face of an increasingly authoritarian government. Nicaragua, the nation that is at the center of this work of scholarship and solidarity, once waged a revolutionary struggle and represented a beacon of hope for many on the planet; now it provides a cautionary tale for all those who may have clung to the romance of past revolutionary figures, but are now deeply concerned to support sustainable social justice and human rights in that nation and at a global level. More than that, it also offers a contemporary and inspiring example of activism that breaks away from earlier models, led by youth and many others who are unwilling to accept the old terms of engagement and instead are struggling for a life-affirming politics, looking toward a more inclusive and just future in which gender, class, sexuality, and racial difference couple with feminist, environmental, and cultural rights, and with durable democratic practices.

I first traveled to Nicaragua in 1989, ten years after the triumph of the Sandinista revolution, when most Nicaraguans and international observers were still confident of a Sandinista electoral victory the following year. When the party of the Sandinistas, the FSLN,<sup>1</sup> lost to a coalition of opposition groups largely as a result of Nicaraguans' exhaustion from the U.S.-backed Contra War, the 1990s saw the sharp transfer of power from Daniel Ortega to the neoliberal government of Violeta Chamorro. That, in turn, led to a host of reversals of

transformational reforms that had been brought about in such areas as land-holding and agrarian reform, health care, social services, and education, as the rollback of the state meant increasing privatization and higher costs to ordinary Nicaraguans.<sup>2</sup> Students had in fact been central to the broad base of supporters of the Sandinista revolution, with a notable presence at the Jesuit Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in Managua and the state-supported Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN), with campuses in Managua and León, respectively. These universities, among others, remained strong centers of Sandinismo until the party fractured in the mid-1990s, and thereafter they remained part of a more critical left presence in the country.

During my brief first visit, I visited the UCA to make use of its documentary resources, and I began collaborating with several faculty members who facilitated my affiliation there as a Fulbright researcher in 1990–1991. The UCA's progressive politics and scholarship were what attracted me, but I was urged by my U.S. funders to accept a second affiliation with the INCAE,<sup>3</sup> known as the "Harvard Business School" of Nicaragua, a better-endowed university that reflected the neoliberal orientation of that time. While the UCA was centrally located in the sprawling city of Managua and suffered the tropical heat during much of the year in sweltering pavillions, alleviated only with fans and the open air, the INCAE's campus was located outside the city at a higher, cooler elevation and with the added benefit of abundant air conditioning. The contrast, both materially and ideologically, was striking. This turned out, in fact, to be a useful double affiliation for me, as I was focusing my research on the paradoxes of Nicaragua at a moment of transition, of a largely struggling population experiencing the body blows of neoliberal measures designed to cut back the state sector and social services and give free rein to capitalist development. While most of my time was out in the city's neighborhoods interviewing women and men concentrated in the informal sector of the economy,<sup>4</sup> the UCA remained the university where I found the vibrancy of students and faculty engaged not only in knowledge production but in critical reflection on the past, present, and future of the nation. Around the size of my home state of New York, Nicaragua had captured my imagination, just as it had the world's, in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

However, the "verticalism" and power plays of Daniel Ortega and his supporters had divided the Sandinista party by 1995; several years later, in 1998, public allegations of two decades of sexual abuse of Zoilamérica Narváez Murillo, his adoptive stepdaughter, outraged feminists and others concerned about Nicaragua's troubled history of widespread gender-based violence. Despite the disillusionment and opposition of his many critics, Ortega's repeated efforts to return to power were finally successful in 2007, as he melded a populist rhetoric and "caudillo" (strongman) style, attracting the votes of his loyalists. While ostensibly an anti-imperialist champion of the poor, he increasingly revealed his neoliberal and authoritarian bent as he sought to build his legacy and his personal wealth around projects like a proposed transoceanic canal, showing a woeful

disregard for the environment and the Indigenous Nicaraguans who would be most affected.

Thus it was not surprising that by 2018, a decade after Ortega's return to power, the political landscape had changed course to the degree that Ortega was often compared to the despised Somoza dynasty that ruled for the 43 years leading up to the 1979 revolution.<sup>5</sup> Nearly four decades later, the government's proposed austerity legislation to reduce the pensions of working-class Nicaraguans was the final straw that led to an uprising, once again involving university students along with others who opposed the draconian, antidemocratic politics of the regime of Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo. The repression that followed was ruthless and resulted in the deaths of hundreds, mostly young Nicaraguans, while thousands more, who feared retaliation, left the country and remained in exile. Public intellectuals, media figures, and feminists were among those targeted, and the climate was one of rising fear, even as some continued to express their opposition and resistance to the autocratic regime. While the Ortega-Murillo regime took a fiercely repressive stance, it also attempted to present a public face of normalcy and business as usual, including the implementation of "quality assurance" regulatory mechanisms at the UCA even while classes were suspended and the campus was under siege.<sup>6</sup> Since the uprising in April 2018, the Nicaraguan government has continued to repress any overt signs of protest, jailed most of the political opposition, and put a stranglehold on organizations—including the UCA, using laws and regulations to coerce those who haven't already been silenced. On November 7, 2021, the presidential election in Nicaragua awarded the presidency to Daniel Ortega with very high levels of abstention and many of his political opponents in jail or exiled out of the country.

Despite its status as a private Jesuit institution, the UCA had long counted on its portion of the guaranteed six percent of the national budget going to the support of scholarships for students from underprivileged backgrounds, and the UCA's criticism of government and paramilitary repression in response to the recent uprising was met by punitive cuts in that government support, threatening the viability of the university.<sup>7</sup> As Wendi Bellanger, UCA's Provost, makes clear in her contribution to this volume, Nicaragua's neoliberal turn in the 1990s was followed by a rising audit culture in the 2000s, institutionalized during the new Sandinista government and diminishing self-governance and academic freedom at the UCA. The university's foundational commitments to faith and social justice, critical inquiry, solidarity with the poor and socially disenfranchised, and indeed its autonomy were all challenged by the new, corporatist, more restrictive terms of engagement in the sphere of education, as elsewhere in the society.

With students prominent among the protesters who rose up beginning in April 2018, Nicaraguan youth were targeted both as individuals and as a collectivity. This is powerfully related in contributions by former UCA student activist Fiore Bran Aragón and UCA faculty allies Karla Lara and Arquímedes González, as well as former UCA lecturer Andrew Gorvetzian in this volume. Students'

lives, as well as their right to an education free from government censure, have been very much on the line as they have fought for social justice and an affirmative politics of care and inclusion, drawing on social media and digital platforms to build solidarity. The fear of violence, economic hardship for students' families, and the state cuts to the UCA budget have meant the severe reduction in student enrollment and in financial support available at the UCA. The solidarity of other Jesuit colleges and universities in the Americas has enabled some UCA students to continue their educations elsewhere throughout the crisis. As Serena Cosgrove's chapter in this volume reveals so well, the commitment of universities like hers in Seattle, which has hosted students and faculty, has made them strongly allied in an international effort to lend a hand and stand up to the power of Nicaragua's powerful state apparatus. In the process, it is not only the UCA that benefits; its sister universities learn important lessons about the strength in collectivity and the necessity of vigilance to protect our democratic institutions domestically and internationally.

José Idiáquez, S.J., President of the UCA in Managua and a contributor to this volume, offers a passionate manifesto calling for wide condemnation of the state's violent response to the protests that began in April 2018, which led to the deepest crisis the university has experienced since its founding in 1960. He likens the repression in Managua to what unfolded in the 1980s when he was a student himself on another UCA campus, in San Salvador, El Salvador. The world looked on in horror when Archbishop Oscar Romero was killed by a sniper during a Mass in 1980 and when six Jesuits at the UCA in San Salvador, along with their housekeeper and her daughter, were brutally assassinated in 1989, targeted because of their opposition to the Salvadoran Armed Forces in El Salvador's civil war. Idiáquez makes it clear that the Managua campus and the Nicaraguan nation are facing a similar crisis of authoritarian rule and state repression, meriting global concern. In confronting the situation at the university he heads as President, he takes inspiration from the intellectual leadership of the Jesuits whose lives were tragically taken on the neighboring UCA campus in El Salvador. Idiáquez agrees with those martyred colleagues that taking up the pen can be more powerful than taking up arms, though authoritarian states may attempt to silence their critics by claiming the lives of students, faculty, staff, and university administrators. In spite of the personal threat, he avers, universities must persevere in struggling for a more just and inclusive society.

In her concluding chapter, Irina Carlota Silber traces the global relevance of the challenges facing the UCA today. She shows how public universities in the Global North—like her institution, the City University of New York—are struggling with neoliberal constraints during politically challenging times. I have seen this myself at the three state universities where I have taught over the course of four decades. A growing number of contingent (non-tenure track) faculty are paid a pittance, often on a course-by-course basis as a cost-cutting strategy. A capitalist-driven emergence of "Responsibility Centered Management"

pits department against department in competition to fill classroom seats and fundraise in hopes of being granted new faculty lines. And a rising audit culture requires nearly-constant self-reporting on a host of measures that are then used by higher-ups to determine pay scales and promotions (or sometimes, the elimination of entire programs). Most chilling are the cases of faculty who are dismissed for taking public stances on sensitive political issues, particularly when they offend wealthy donors or administrators in seats of power. Frequently, those who are “let go” are women, faculty of color, and others in the most vulnerable positions at the university.

This volume should help ensure that Nicaragua and its lessons will not soon be forgotten. We come away from reading these contributors’ work with still greater respect for those who insist that the nation adhere to the principles that many fought for over the course of the last century—the Nicaraguans of diverse generations and social backgrounds who have sought transformational change leading to a durable, democratic society. For their part, youth, including college students, have been critical to efforts to confront the authoritarian politics that have sedimented in the country, and they possess the hope and imagination to envision a more just, far-reaching Nicaragua.<sup>8</sup> Working in solidarity with partners in the region and internationally, including some of this book’s contributors, the UCA academic community in Managua, Nicaragua has demonstrated the breadth of vision to bravely work toward such a future.

## Notes

- 1 Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional.
- 2 To be sure, there were structural adjustments to education in 1988 under the Sandinista government as well, and the six percent of the national government guaranteed to university education was actually formalized in 1990; the rollback of state support was uneven after the 1990 elections, and here I am referring to the growing cost of education for families with schoolchildren. See Wendi Bellanger’s chapter in this volume for more detailed discussion of neoliberal reform and the impact on the UCA in Managua.
- 3 Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas.
- 4 My research in Nicaragua extended from 1989 through 2012, focusing on the neoliberal turn since the 1990s, the gendered impact on work in the informal economy, and the social movements that emerged during that period (Babb 2001, 2019).
- 5 See the *New York Times* Guest Opinion by writer and poet Gioconda Belli (2021) for an account by a former Sandinista militant and now long-time critic of Daniel Ortega, written as the deeply fraudulent November 2021 election was approaching.
- 6 See Bellanger (this volume) for discussion of the government’s strategy of normalization as it controlled dissent at the universities during this time. Relatedly, in my own research on tourism, a leading industry in Nicaragua, I found it striking that even after April 2018, the national tourism website ([www.intur.gob.ni](http://www.intur.gob.ni)) suggested travel-as-usual, at a time when any knowledgeable traveler would steer clear of Nicaragua (Babb 2020).
- 7 See Cosgrove (this volume) for discussion of these budget cuts and their impact at the UCA.

8 For more on the activism of youth, and especially women, see the work of Bran Aragón in this volume, Bran Aragón and Goett (2021), and Chamorro and Yang (2018). These works emphasize the younger generation's attention to issues that go beyond traditional party politics (including feminism, the environment, and LGBTQ rights) and their use of alternative strategies such as occupying universities, challenging many Nicaraguans' view that youth in their country today are apolitical or apathetic. This volume makes abundantly clear that youth are in the forefront of progressive change in Nicaragua.

## References

- Babb, Florence E. 2001. *After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- . 2019. "Nicaraguan Legacies: Advances and Setbacks in Feminist and LGBTQ Activism." In *A Nicaraguan Exceptionalism? Debating the Legacy of the Sandinista Revolution*. Edited by Hilary Francis. Pp. 171–184. London: Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS), University of London.
- . 2020. "Peru and Nicaragua: Tourism Development in Postconflict Eras." In *Tourism Planning and Development in Central and South America*. Edited by Carlos Monterrubio, Konstantinos Andriotis, and Dimitrios Stylidis. Pp. 156–172. UK: CABI.
- Belli, Gioconda. 2021. "Daniel Ortega and the Crushing of the Nicaraguan Dream," Guest Opinion, *New York Times* 7/4/21.
- Bran Aragón, Fiore Stella and Jennifer Goett. 2021. "¡Matria libre y vivir!: Youth Activism and Nicaragua's 2018 Insurrection." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 25(4):532–551.
- Chamorro, Luciana and Emilia Yang. 2018. "Movilización social y tácticas de control en el neosandinismo. El caso de #OcupaINSS." *Cahiers des Amériques Latines* 87(1):91–115.



# ABOUT THE EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

**Florence E. Babb**, author of the foreword, is the Anthony Harrington Distinguished Professor in Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Wendi Bellanger**, co-editor and contributor, serves as the Provost of the Universidad Centroamericana in Managua, Nicaragua.

**Fiore Bran Aragón**, contributor, is a former UCA student and graduate student in Latin American Studies at the University of New Mexico.

**Serena Cosgrove**, co-editor and contributor, is the faculty coordinator of Seattle University's Central America Initiative and Associate Professor in International Studies at Seattle University.

**Hallie S. Evans**, contributor, is the program assistant for Seattle University's Central America Initiative and a double major in International Studies and Spanish at Seattle University.

**Arquímedes González**, contributor, is a UCA Professor in the Communications Department.

**Andrew Gorvetzian**, contributor, is a former Lecturer at the UCA and graduate student in Social Anthropology at the University of New Mexico.

**José (Chepe) Idiáquez, S.J.**, contributor, is the President of the Universidad Centroamericana in Managua, Nicaragua.

**Karla Lara**, contributor, is a UCA Professor in the Communications Department.

**James Quesada**, contributor, is Professor of Anthropology at San Francisco State University.

**Irina Carlota Silber**, co-editor and contributor, is Professor of Anthropology at the City College of New York.

# A TIMELINE FOR UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY IN NICARAGUA

by Hallie S. Evans

Entries specific to the UCA are displayed in bold

1946	Somoza closed the Central University ( <i>Universidad Central</i> ) in Managua. This followed student mobilizations in 1944 against the re-election of Somoza. The mobilizations were repressed by the National Guard and students were forced to take refuge in the Guatemalan Embassy. <sup>1</sup>
1948	The Central American University Confederation ( <i>Confederación Universitaria Centroamericana</i> ) and its Central American Superior Council on Universities ( <i>Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano, CSUCA</i> ) were established. At their first forum, they published the Declaration of Principles on the Purposes and Functions of the Contemporary University and especially the Universities of Central America ( <i>Declaración de Principios sobre los fines y funciones de la Universidad contemporánea y en especial de las Universidades de Centroamérica</i> ) which included the importance of collaboration between universities and the state without sacrificing university autonomy and freedom in research. It championed university autonomy as an essential condition of the functions of universities. <sup>2</sup>
1951	Somoza closed the University of Granada ( <i>Universidad de Granada</i> ). The closure was part of a move by Somoza to isolate the National University of Nicaragua ( <i>Universidad Nacional de Nicaragua, UNN</i> ) in León, where it was confined in a province and away from the capital. <sup>3</sup>
1953	Students from the Circle of Legal and Social Studies ( <i>el Círculo de Estudios Jurídicos y Sociales, CEJIS</i> ) wrote the “Draft Organic Law of the National University” ( <i>Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional</i> ). The purpose of the project was to work toward achieving university autonomy in Nicaragua. One of the ways CEJIS raised awareness about the state of university autonomy in Nicaragua was through a series of conferences that compared the state of university autonomy throughout Latin America. <sup>4</sup>

1955	CEJIS motivated the creation of the Permanent Action Committee for University Autonomy ( <i>Comité de Acción Permanente Pro-Autonomía Universitaria</i> ), a committee geared toward achieving university autonomy. The committee and a large group of students, collaborating with a member of the Chamber of Deputies, presented the “Draft Organic Law of the National University” ( <i>Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional</i> ) to the Chamber of Deputies. <sup>5</sup>
1957	Mariano Fiallos Gil accepted the role of president at the UNN with the condition that all influence of party politics is expelled from the university. <sup>6</sup>
1958	The government approved Executive Order No. 38, the National University Law ( <i>Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional</i> ), which granted autonomy to the National University: the UNN becomes the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN). <sup>7</sup>
1959	Joaquín Solís Piura, president of the students’ organization at UNAN led the student struggle for university autonomy. The students demanded changes in the structure of the university administration and the way education was imparted. The student struggle was met with a massacre ordered by Somoza on July 23rd by the National Guard. <sup>8</sup>
1960	<b>The Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) was founded. It was the first private university in Nicaragua and Central America. The founding of a private Catholic university was contentious as some from the Central American Council for Higher Education Consejo (Centroamericano de Educación Superior, CESUCA) considered it to challenge university autonomy.</b>
1960	The Technical Commission of the Higher University Council ( <i>Comisión Técnica del Consejo Superior Universitario</i> ) met in San José, Costa Rica and issued a series of recommendations to regulate the operation of private universities in Central America.
1966	University autonomy was guaranteed in Article 115 of the Nicaraguan Constitution. It allocated 2% of the general budget to the National University. Prior to this legislation, funding was exclusively dealt with by the executive branch. The establishment of a fixed budget seemed to free universities from the whims of party politics and guarantee autonomy. <sup>9</sup>
1972	As president of the UNAN, Dr. Carlos Tünnermann began to promote the campaign for 6% allocation of the general budget to universities. <sup>10</sup>
1979	<b>The FSLN overthrew the Somoza government. The FSLN’s rise to power questioned the UCA’s autonomy as the new government challenged the legitimacy of a private religious school and promoted nationalization.</b>
1980	The National Council of Higher Education ( <i>Consejo Nacional de la Educación Superior, CNES</i> ) was created under the Sandinista government in order to approve study plans and intervene in the budgets and in the appointment of university presidents. This effectively restricted university autonomy. <sup>11</sup>

1980	<b>The Sandinista government took several actions to restrict the autonomy of the UCA. They integrated an FSLN representative into the UCA's board of directors, transferred the engineering majors to create a new university—the National University for Engineering (<i>la Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería</i>), and made the UCA dependent on state funding by curtailing the collection of tuition fees.</b>
1990	Law 89, the Law of the Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education ( <i>la Ley de Autonomía de las Instituciones de Educación Superior</i> ), was approved following the election of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of the National Opposition Union ( <i>Unión Nacional Opositora, UNO</i> ) party. The law dictated that the government's contribution to the universities must be no less than 6% of the income of the General Revenue Budget. This restored university autonomy that was lost under the administration of CNES. Students led mass demonstrations as a result to demand adherence to Law 89 and full allocation of the 6%. Article 8 in Law 89 declared that universities have teaching or academic, organic, administrative, and financial or economic autonomy. <sup>12</sup>
1990	<b>The National Council of Universities (<i>Consejo Nacional de Universidades, CNU</i>) was created under Law 89. As a non-profit civil association, the UCA was included as a member of the CNU and therefore a beneficiary of the 6%. During this period, the CNU authorized the creation of new universities, often referred to as “garage universities” given their small size. Since they were not incorporated in the CNU, they were not beneficiaries of the state budget.</b>
1992	The 6% of the total budget was confirmed, signifying a win by student mobilizations. <sup>13</sup>
1995	The 6% allocation was subsequently incorporated into the 1995 constitutional reform. <sup>14</sup>
1996	The country's elections were won by the Liberal Constitutional Party ( <i>Partido Liberal Constitucionalista, PLC</i> ), which later began to cede quotas of power to the FSLN. This complicated the ability of universities to garner independence from partisan politics. The end of the 1990s consequently saw an increase in university faculty who were hired or fired based on their association to the FSLN. <sup>15</sup>
2003	The ALFA Tuning Latin America Project, an extension of the EU's 2001 tuning project, introduced and reinforced corporatized education systems in Latin America. This effort championed tenets of managerialism such as audit culture. The entrenchment of the corporatized university popularized a server-client relationship between faculty and students which hindered inter-university collaboration and academic freedom and autonomy. <sup>16</sup>

2006	Law 582, the General Education Law ( <i>la Ley General de Educación</i> ), was approved. The law instituted the General Guidelines for Education ( <i>Lineamientos Generales para la Educación</i> ) and the National Educational System ( <i>el Sistema Educativo Nacional</i> ), dictated the powers of the Nicaraguan state in education, and diminished the rights of educators. <sup>17</sup>
2007	The FSLN again rose to power in Nicaragua with Daniel Ortega occupying the presidency. This intensified limitations on academic freedom and freedom of thought as professors resorted to self-censorship to ensure their institutions could receive the 6% stipulated in Law 89. The CNU has been subsumed into Sandinista clientelism, allowing the party to influence faculty appointments and scholarship decisions. Furthermore, the students' union (UNEN) became subject to political control by the FSLN. <sup>18</sup>
2007	Law 621, the Law of Access to Public Information ( <i>la Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública</i> ) was approved. Although it was meant to improve access to public information, an important resource for researchers in universities, it is neither taught nor enforced in many universities. <sup>19</sup>
2011	The government passed Law 704, the Law Creating the National System for Quality Assurance of Education and Regulator of the National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation ( <i>la Ley Creadora del Sistema Nacional para el Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación y Reguladora del Consejo Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación</i> ), which managed the National Council on Evaluation and Accreditation ( <i>el Consejo Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación</i> , CNEA). While the CNEA was posited as a neutral evaluatory body, its president, vice president, and 5 of its members were elected by the National Assembly. The law required all higher education institutions to establish an accreditation process as well as an internal system of quality assurance. It also undermined the CNU's role in higher education. <sup>20</sup>
2018	Students across Nicaragua took to the streets en masse on April 18th to protest reforms in Nicaragua's social security system mandated by Daniel Ortega. Student mobilizations in public universities were met with massacres, persecutions, jailings, torture, and mass expulsions. Government repression was aided by university authorities and UNEN. The atmosphere in universities was changed after the mobilizations with increased police presence on campus, prohibitions of group gatherings, and increased surveillance. <sup>21</sup>
2018	<b>Diverse sectors of the Nicaraguan citizenry again took to the streets of Managua on Mother's Day to demand justice for the families of those killed in demonstrations earlier that year. The Nicaraguan police attacked protestors near the UCA, killing at least 15 people. People took refuge inside the UCA campus.</b>
2018	Professor Ricardo Baltodano of the Polytechnic University of Nicaragua ( <i>la Universidad Politécnica de Nicaragua, UPOLI</i> ) was imprisoned by the Sandinista Government. <sup>22</sup>