DEAR FRIENDS,

There is no way around it; it has been a tough year. The pandemic has touched the lives of all of us in some way. Stories of difficulty and tragedy abound, and the College in Carmen Pampa is no exception. Yet we persevere.

*Resilience is the attribute that gets us through challenging times.* These tend to be the times which afford us real learning, real growth and deeper insight.

If you’ve spent any time at the College or had the chance to know members of the UAC-CP community, you know that life for most UAC-CP students is rife with challenges. The entire exercise of imagining a college in a remote part of the world, serving the under-privileged and bringing about the slow transformational work of lifting generations out of poverty and into self-determination, is a case study in immeasurable resilience.

So, armed with a long history of finding solutions to seemingly impossible challenges, the students, faculty and staff at the UAC-CP stepped up when tasked with transitioning from in-person classes to remote learning due to the COVID outbreak. The College has rolled out online learning with impressive success, despite the fact that many students have no access to laptops or internet or, in some cases, even electricity in their rural communities. The College has revised the curriculum to accommodate virtual learning, negotiated better deals for students’ internet data, and deployed virtual educational platforms. Thanks to the remarkable generosity of many donors, we were able to subsidize internet costs for students. Every member of the UAC-CP community (students, teachers, volunteers and donors) has worked harder than ever to keep the academic calendar on track. This community resilience is fueled by all of you helping to make it happen.

On an exterior wall of the original quad is a mural of the iconic mountains with the words “*Aprendizaje es Metanoia.*” Loosely translated this means learning is the path to metanoia, the deep transformational change in mindset needed to gain wisdom and insight. This motto was Sister Damon Nolan’s vision for the College when she founded it nearly 30 years ago. Her hope was for each of us to experience that transformational change because of our relationship with the UAC-CP as either a student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, donor or guest.

As we close out this year, mindful of the challenges that still remain, we hope all will be inspired by the examples of resilience that we see in the lives of the students in Carmen Pampa. Further, that we all can leverage challenging life experiences and use them as springboards toward personal growth and the deep transformational change that the UAC-CP’s motto calls us to live out.

On behalf of the College and Carmen Pampa Fund, we extend profound gratitude to everyone who supports this work, wishes for your health and well-being, and a request that you continue to support our resilient community of students, faculty, and staff in Carmen Pampa.

Mark Leahy, 
CPF Board Chair

Tara L. Nolan
Interim Executive Director
Ernesto Arinez has overcome a lot of obstacles in life, but he says his current fight for quality health care is one of the most challenging — both personally and professionally.

The 2007 UAC-CP Nursing graduate recently left his beloved position as chief nurse of the ICU unit at German Busch Hospital in Trinidad, Bolivia, to accept an appointment by the hospital’s administration to serve as the director of human resources. It wasn’t a career move Ernesto was looking to make, but the COVID-19 pandemic didn’t leave him with much of a choice. “Nobody wanted the job,” he explained.

As COVID-19 rapidly spread in late March and the northeastern Bolivian Department of Beni became a hotspot with the highest per capita mortality rate in the world, administrators at the top tier public hospital abandoned their jobs for fear of contracting COVID-19. When the director of the hospital saw Ernesto’s background in nursing, complemented by his postgraduate degree in hospital administration, Ernesto was asked to step into the role.

Ernesto accepted the job, but not because he wanted a promotion. His vocation is to attend to patients in need of critical care, but Ernesto knew his colleagues depended on him. With the Bolivian health care system collapsing, he felt called to represent the dedicated team of doctors and nurses attending to patients — often without regular paychecks from the government — as space and equipment allowed.

Since filling the position in May just one month after he, his wife Maritza Choque (UAC-CP Nursing 2006) and their two daughters recovered from COVID-19, Ernesto has dedicated most of his time to ensuring that hospital staff have safe working conditions, access to personal protection equipment, as well as fair regularly paid wages and benefits. He is now a well-respected advocate for those who treat patients.

Once the pandemic crisis passes, Ernesto looks forward to returning to his work as an ICU nurse. “I love what I do,” said the Carmen Pampa native, who was the first in his family to graduate from college. “I am the nurse most proud of my profession. Despite the challenges, I wouldn’t trade my work for anything.”

UAC-CP DIRECTOR GENERAL MESSAGE: Jose Luís Beltran

During his nearly 20 years of experience as a professor, department chair and now director general of the College, José Luis Beltran says he’s always seen the determination of UAC-CP students to study and graduate.

“When students come to Carmen Pampa they recognize that this is their opportunity to change their life direction,” he said. “They know that, with a college degree, they can have better options for work and more success in life for themselves and others.”

Faced with so many social, economic challenges, the students’ resilient spirits are what inspire and motivate Beltran’s work to educate Bolivian youth.
Helping Others Face Obstacles: Life Experience Shapes Student’s Goals

Alexia Lurisi Chuqui knows what it takes to be resilient. Born with a physical disability, the second-year Education student has used crutches for most of her life and is limited in her ability to walk long distances, navigate stairs, or easily access public transportation. But those physical challenges have never stopped her.

When it came time to think about her future, Alexia chose to attend the UAC-CP because she wanted a university that could accommodate her limited physical abilities. When Alexia arrived to the UAC-CP in 2019 she enrolled in the Education Department. Her goal is to become a teacher for economically and socially disadvantaged children — including children with disabilities. In Bolivia, she explained, it’s hard for kids facing these types of obstacles to finish elementary or high school. But Alexia wants to change that.

Living with a physical disability, especially in rural Bolivia, is challenging, but Alexia has found support systems at the College that have helped her to be successful. In addition to making good friends and building strong relationships with her professors, the UAC-CP administration has provided her with a lot of support.

Last year the administrators moved the Education students’ dorms to the first floor of the building so Alexia could more easily access her room and live with her classmates. One administrator regularly drives her from Carmen Pampa to the nearby town of Coroico so she can attend physical therapy sessions without having to take public transportation, which is not readily accessible for people with physical disabilities. She is grateful to have such a supportive community at the College.

“It is important not to look at disabilities as impediments to excelling in life or becoming a professional. I have learned that it is key to surround yourself with good people who can help you, who trust and believe in you, and who can give you good advice,” Alexia said. “Despite the challenges that life gives you, you have to believe in yourself and continue moving forward.”

Once she completes her undergraduate degree, Alexia plans to open an education center in her home community of Tumupasa, which is located near the Bolivian Amazon — about 12 hours by bus from Carmen Pampa. “I want to help all children overcome their personal obstacles and get an education.”

ENROLLMENT & GRADUATION DATA: July 2019 - June 2020

- 667 students enrolled in classes for the first semester of the 2020 academic year.
- 45 students graduated from the UAC-CP during CPF’s 2020 fiscal year.
- 38% Men
- 62% Women
- Of the College’s 863 graduates, 53% are women.

Note: The UAC-CP’s academic year runs with the calendar year. Classes begin in January and finish in December.

Note: To graduate, students must defend a thesis, write a business plan, or complete a one-year internship in their field of study.
Founded in 1999, Carmen Pampa Fund (CPF) is a Minnesota-based 501(c)3 non-profit organization that generates resources to assist with the growth and development of the Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP). The UAC-CP is a college located in rural Bolivia that serves poor families through education, research, production, community service, and leadership formation projects.

Carmen Pampa Fund,  
P.O. Box 131145  
St. Paul, MN 55113  
651-641-1588  
www.carmenpampafund.org

FINANCIAL DATA  (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020)

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For more detailed financial information, please visit our website: www.carmenpampafund.org/transparency

CPF Board Members
Mark Leahy, Board Chair
Mary Pat Lee, Vice Chair
Lonny Wittnebel, Treasurer
Becky Monnens, Secretary
Amparo Ballivian
Pablo Eduardo
Ann Leahy
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Edward Flahavan, Founder
Richard C. Leahy†, Founder

CPF Team
Emily Gray
Nadine Leahy
Sarah Mechtenberg
Tara L. Nolan

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José Luis Beltran, Director General
José Luis Mamani, Academic Director

Transforming the lives of Bolivians through education.