

Brazil Plans to Create 9 Federal Universities and 41 Campuses

Contributed by Carolina Pimentel
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Brazil expects to have 700,000 more students enrolled in higher education in 2007. This estimate was announced by the minister of Education, Fernando Haddad, during a ceremony to sign agreements for the construction of university centers in 14 Brazilian states. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was present at the ceremony.

The initiative is part of the Expansion program, which intends to create nine federal universities and 41 university campuses throughout Brazil. Through this program, the Minister declared, 125,000 students are expected to enter the federal higher education system.

According to Haddad, another measure that should produce a significant increase in the number of university youth is the University for All Program (ProUni). He said that this program will provide 450,000 full and partial scholarships enabling low-income students to attend private institutions.

The Minister went on to say that, if it is approved by the National Congress, the university reform should permit another 125,000 students to partake of higher education.

"In the four years [of Lula's Administration], we will have benefited 700,000 young people who would otherwise have been unable to have access to higher education," he pointed out. "This represents practically double the number of students currently served by the federal system."

During the ceremony, President Lula emphasized the need for a "synchronized effort" involving education and the country's growth. "If the economy is going to grow, as I am sure it will, knowledge needs to expand concurrently. What would be exasperating, when industry needs to hire more technical and professional workers, is for us to discover that there is a shortage in the market."

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