The history of our Association is intertwined to our universities’ and to our Institute’s history. The International Association of Lasallian Universities was officially founded on 1998, nevertheless our history started earlier with our first ways of collaboration between universities within our different regions.

In 1978 Encuentro I occurred, where all presidents of universities got together for the first time in Morelos, Mexico summoned by Brother José Cervantes assigned by the General Council of Educational Mission. During this encounter, only brothers participated and not a single lay collaborator. The attendees to this meeting were not clear on the purpose of it and they lacked a structure to help taking things forward.

It was not until 1988 that the second Encuentro took place, again orchestrated by Brother Cervantes and hosted by La Salle University Mexico. Two important highlights of that gathering: the topic of “The Role of Laymen in the University” and the panel “What students hope and want of Lasallian universities” with the participation of university students. Unlike the previous gathering, a date and place was set for Encuentro III, being St. Mary’s College of California the elected host.

As for the Institute, although the first two lasallian universities were founded in 1850’s, it was not until the 42nd General Chapter in 1993 that a relationship was addressed in terms of pastoral ministry. It was also that chapter, the first one where twenty lay collaborators were brought together to work in association.

The trend on new technologies and better communication channels supported the evolution of universities, among companies and organizations, towards globalization. Although our institutions have always been considered ‘international’ because of our essence and presence in all continents, is until technology assisted our efforts to associate when this idea begins to materialize. Associations began to appear around regions and districts such as Lasallian Mexican Institutions of Higher Education in Mexico, One La Salle in Philippines, Lasallian Association of Colleges and University Presidents in USA, and many more.

The unthinkable during the first encounter of presidents about setting rules and status to formally organize the association, became a reality through the work in Encuentros IV and V that took place at Casa Generalizia in Rome in 1995 and 1997. The International Association of Lasallian Higher Education was founded on 1998 with Brother Craig Franz as President of the new international organization.

It was in Encuentro VI in Philippines 2001were decisions were made, Regional Representatives were elected, Br. Franz was reelected and our current name was set, International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU).
The clear guidelines that had come from the center of the Institute helped to set goals and vision. Brother Álvaro Echeverría’s encouragement, accompaniment and demands as Superior General had an impact on the association that soon became a strong commitment among all members.

In his participation on the Encuentro IX, Philadelphia 2009, Br. Alvaro addressed the members:

“IALU should cease to be a merely benevolent association that watches over its tertiary institutions and shares fraternally. It should create a body, based on what we already have, that will allow it to affirm, support and effectively transform the educational mission at the tertiary level through our loyalty to the lasallian legacy.”

“Knowing and accepting who we are and what we do, we help one another mutually. Institutions with more experience and resources may become mentors for those starting out, or for the poor. The most powerful institutions can provide fraternal support to the most fragile institutions. I fell that we should not allow this moment or the opportunity to create a more coherent, cohesive IALU with greater focus on the mission slip away…I am not encouraging you to create a colossal giant body that will control and paralyze our activities, and require enormous resources, but rather one that will facilitate and aid in a modest but effective collaboration. The review of our presence at the tertiary level that I have given you is undoubtedly one of the clearest signs of the times for our Institute. Now is the time to reinvent IALU with ambition and hope.”

Since then, IALU and its members have worked together to build a network with unique characteristics: international, diverse, solidary, attentive to the needs of students and society and to the call of the Institute, transforming and connected; a network that using the charism of Saint John Baptist De La Salle can respond to the poverties of our times.