



THE UNIVERSITY OF GIRONA



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IN THE FOREGROUND, FORMES CHURCH OF *SANT DOMÈNEC*, MAIN HALL OF GIRONA UNIVERSITY.

THE UNIVERSITY OF GIRONA NEEDS TO BE A RADICALLY CATALAN UNIVERSITY, BECAUSE THIS IS THE ONLY WAY IT WILL BE ABLE TO FIND ITS PLACE IN SOCIETY.

JOSEP M. NADAL FARRERAS PRESIDENT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE. UNIVERSITAT DE GIRONA

On 12 December 1991, the Catalan parliament approved Law 35/91 creating the University of Girona. It was a great day for those of us who had been fighting for an independent university for all the people of Girona, who identify with the autonomous nature of an institution of this sort, born with a wish to serve and, as the city fathers wanted in 1484, to bring "such benefit and use to this city".

It was the culmination of continued efforts that had gradually begun to consolidate at the end of the sixties (when the School of Technical Agricultural Engineering and the University College of Girona were founded) and that go

back, as does the present University, to the *Estudi General* founded by Alfons the Magnanimous in 1446. Later, Girona's university life had to endure the well known ups and downs of the country's history. To put it briefly: In 1717 Philip V ordered it to be closed; in 1869 the *Universitat Lliure de Girona* was established; at the beginning of the century, classes were started at the *Escola Normal*; until we come to the recent moves, already described, to consolidate university education in Girona (which previously depended on the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and the Autonomous University of Barcelona).

The new University grew out of three separate traditions: humanistic, technical and scientific. The result is the five faculties making it up today: the Faculty of Arts, with courses in Philosophy, Catalan Philology, Hispanic Philology, Geography, History and History of Art; the Faculty of Legal and Economic Sciences, with courses in Law and Business Studies; the Faculty of Experimental and Health Sciences, with courses in Biology, Chemistry, Nursing and Environmental Sciences; the Faculty of Educational Sciences, with courses in Teacher Training, Psychology, Pedagogy and Social Education; and the Higher Polytechnic College, with courses in



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Technical Architecture, Industrial Engineering, Technical Engineering in Industrial Electronics, in Farming, in Technical Engineering in Farming and Food Industries, in Computer Studies, Mechanics, Industrial Chemistry, and the Higher Degree in Industrial Design Engineering.

Apart from the teaching activities as such, the Research Institutes and the scientific work of the teaching staff form the basis for the research work, another of the University's central activities. These Research Institutes are the Institute of Educational Sciences, of Catalan Language and Culture, of Water Ecology, of Computational Chemistry and the Ferrater Mora Chair in Contemporary Thinking. These centres organise a series of activities, either as part of the Summer Courses the University holds each year, or else during the academic year, which include the Congress on Computational Chemistry, that on the History of Language, and the seminars by guest speakers such as Noam Chomsky, Adam Schaff, W. Quine, P. Ricouer, Father Miquel Batllori, etc.

From what we have seen so far, we need to convince others and ourselves that the "periphery" is a real alternative to the traditional university system. Without wanting to question the role of the large, consolidated universities, we must stress the undeniable fact that the new, small universities can and must, and in many ways already are, great universities. And this is so, first of all, because they are young and, free of the bureaucratic stagnation that history and greatness tend to bring with them, have to base their strength on creativity and imagination, and secondly, because they are small and are therefore especially fertile ground for intellectual sharing and exchange.

Girona's must therefore be a great University. To achieve this it must necessarily be integrated in the social fabric that sustains it (the rehabilitation of buildings in the old part of Girona, collaboration with other citizen's organisations and the vitality of university life speak for this), but it must also fight against provincialism and open its arms to ev-

eryone and to all ways of thinking. This means being universal. But it must not fall into the trap of thinking that it can form part of the world around it without being what it is. Ours must be a radically Catalan university, because that is the only way it will be able to find its place in society.

The university is a public service and this forces us to put the collective interest above all else. Seen in this light, teaching and research must form the two basic pillars of the new University. I would like the UdG to become known for its fight to correct the present trend in favour of stimulating research activity, while little is done to encourage improvements in teaching. A balance between the two would be to everyone's benefit. The University must also watch over the intellectual and human progress of its components. In a world in which financial gain is often the only measuring-stick we have, a radical, technical and humanistic training for the sole benefit of the human being is a challenge we must all face together. ●