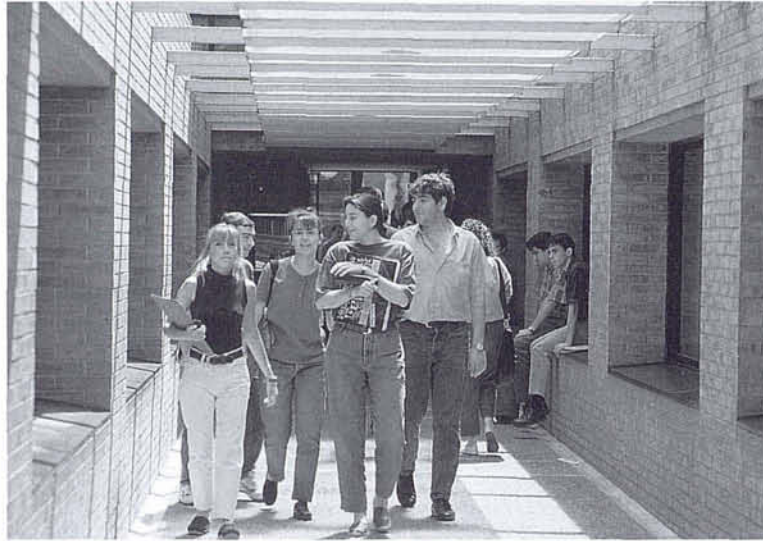




THE UNIVERSITY OF THE BALEARIC ISLANDS



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SINCE THE EIGHTIES THE UNIVERSITY OF THE BALEARIC ISLES HAS REALLY GOT INTO ITS STRIDE, TAKING SHAPE AS A HISTORIC PROJECT CONCEIVED AS A MEANS OF FURTHERING THE GROWTH AND SELF-AWARENESS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BALEARICS.

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They say that each people is the product of its history. For centuries the Balearic Isles have been a stopping-off point. Wrapped in the sea that surrounds and bounds them, sheltered behind the cliffs that look out like watchtowers over the distant horizon, they have a long history behind them. Today, the society wavers awkwardly between openness to the world –what Llorenç Villalonga called *cosmopolitanism*– and the millstone of entrenchment behind an almost ances-

tral lethargy –what in more or less poetic terms has been called *island tranquility*.

It certainly hasn't been easy getting a university for our islands, and even less so bringing it to the point it's at today, when in spite of the continuing shortcomings it really does seem to be taking off. The truth is that the University is finally a reality –it's here. It's no longer the dream some Majorcans had a few decades ago, when all there was were no more than plans not yet begun; now it's

a rich and complex project, ready for whatever the future holds in store, and with a past behind it which, though short, is full of little conquests.

It was during 1967-68 that the first classes in Philosophy and Art were held at the Estudi General Lul·lià, rebuilt in 1949 by the architect Gabriel Alomar, in the Carrer Roc, in the heart of the old part of Palma, close to the palaces and courtyards. Precisely there, as a symbol of renewal and future, amongst the ancient streets and old stones, one

could study for the corresponding faculty of Barcelona's Central University. With its 100 or so students, this was the embryo of what eleven years later, thanks to a law signed on 15 March 1978, was to be the University of the Balearic Isles.

The first steps taken by the young institution were accompanied by the spark of success. The number of students rapidly grew, doubling in a single year. During 1971-72 the specialities of History, Geography and Art were added. Before long, it began to outgrow the premises at the Estudi General and in 1973 classes were moved to Son Malferit, still an entirely provisional site. That same year classes were started in Law, in this case dependant on the Autonomous University of Barcelona. But these were just the first, uncertain steps in what was a new world. A world that was advancing slowly but surely towards consolidation.

Popular demand for a university of our own became more and more unanimous. For one thing it was argued that the number of students in the Balearics fully justified the creation of an independent university, and for another that the fact of being an island called for special treatment that would make it possible to go on to further education without having to leave for the Peninsula. 10 June 1978 saw the formation of the management committee of what was called the University of Palma de Mallorca –later the University of the Balearic Isles. Antoni Roig i Muntaner (1978-1981) and Antoni Ribera Blancafort were the first rectors.

However, it was in the eighties that the University really got into its stride. The arrival of the university reform law in 1983 opened the way for the drawing up and approval two years later of the Statutes that guarantee a certain autonomy and allow a margin for manoeuvre. In 1989 these Statutes were redrafted to correct the ambiguities and technical deficiencies that had shown up. The result aims at consolidating the University of the Balearic Isles as a truly histo-



rical project, conceived as a means of furthering the growth and self-awareness of the people of the Balearics and, at the same time, as an instrument of collective evolution, always at the service of freedom and culture.

The University's present structure is based on Departments, basic teaching and research units organised by areas of knowledge grouping together related subjects. Thus we find the Departments of Environmental Biology, of Fundamental Biology and of Health Sciences, Educational Sciences, Earth Sciences, Historical Sciences and Theory of the Arts, Mathematical Sciences and Computer Studies, of Private Law, of Public Law, of Economics and Business Studies, of Catalan Philology and General Linguistics, of Spanish and Modern Philology, of Philosophy, of Physics, of Psychology and of Chemistry. These Departments are linked to a series of faculties, colleges and schools in charge of the administration and material organisation of the university courses: the Faculty of Science, of Law, of Educa-

tion, of Management Studies, of Philosophy and Art, of Computer Studies, the College of Business Studies, the College of Nursing and the Polytechnic. The University is also responsible for the teaching at the Official School of Tourism and three associated centres (the Albert Giménez Teacher Training School, the College of Social Workers and the College of Social Graduates). Then there are also the University Institutes, which are pluridisciplinary research units: the Institute of Educational Sciences is responsible for the training of teachers and for research and technical assessment at the different educational levels. The Institute of Advanced Studies is a mixed research centre set up thanks to an agreement between the Higher Council for Scientific Investigation and the University of the Balearics, with the support of the autonomous institutions.

Today there are more than 13,000 students registered at the University and the numbers increase significantly every year. There are now large numbers of graduates who have been able to start and finish their studies in Mallorca and who now occupy a range of sometimes very important positions in the island's social fabric. Since 1973 there has also been an investment policy aimed at reforming and building the present campus, in the Carretera de Valldemossa, in an attractive setting amongst hills and almond trees. Here we find the buildings where classes are held today (Ramon Llull, Mateu Orfila i Rotger, Darwin and Anselm Turmeda), the administration building (Son Lledó); new lecture halls have also been completed, as well as research centres, the central library, the future assembly hall, the students' residence –Bartomeu Rosselló Pòrcel–, a sports area, an area of natural reserve and the Catering College.

Nadal Batle, Rector of the University of the Balearic Isles since the end of 1982, and his team have consolidated in little more than ten years what was once an inspiring project, today a solid reality promising a brilliant future. ●