

Fundación Occident announces the winners of the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships for young people without university references

- Ten girls and two boys, who will study at nine Spanish universities, have been selected for their academic trajectory from among over 100 applications.
- The scholarships, which are aimed at young people who will become the first in their family to attend university or the first women in their family to pursue a STEM degree, cover the cost of the degree and offer a mentoring and training programme to develop cross-cutting skills.
- With this initiative, Fundación Occident reinforces its commitment to quality education and equal opportunities, supporting talented young people in completing their studies and building their professional future.

Access to university is strongly influenced by family origin. Young people whose parents have not completed higher education face barriers, often invisible, that make it difficult to obtain a university degree or a good job upon completion of their studies. This is evidenced by the latest data from the OECD's Education at a Glance 2024 report, which establishes that only 19% of these young people complete university education, compared to 72% of the children of graduates. In Spain, this gap has consequences that transcend the academic stage: the average salaries of people with a university degree are between 55% and 85% higher than those of people with only secondary education (Encuesta de Población Activa, 2023).

Mindful of this reality, Fundación Occident has announced today the names of the beneficiaries of the second edition of its [Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships](#). For the second year in a row, the **Foundation has awarded 12 scholarships** aimed at young people who will be the first in their family to overcome all barriers and access university education or who will become the first women in their family to study a degree in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) field.

In this second edition, **ten girls and two boys** from nine autonomous communities (Andalusia, Aragon, Canary Islands, Castilla y Leon, Catalonia, Madrid, Murcia, Navarre and Valencia) have been selected. These 12 young people will begin their university path this 2025/2026 academic year, studying degrees as diverse as medicine, classical philology or aeronautical engineering at 10 universities in the provinces of Alicante, Bilbao, Las Palmas, Madrid, Salamanca, Seville, Tarragona, Valencia and Zaragoza.

"By means of these scholarships, we want to ensure that talent and effort carry more weight in the future of each of our students than any socioeconomic barrier. This is why we are proud to support these young people as they move on to university, offering them the tools required to develop their full potential", says Laura Halpern, President of Fundación Occident.

About Fundación Occident

Fundación Occident, formerly Fundación Jesús Serra, is a private non-profit entity, created in memory of Jesús Serra Santamans, a renowned businessman and patron, who was the founder of GCO (Grupo Catalana Occidente). Its activity consists of developing and supporting initiatives in the fields of research, business and teaching, social action, sport, and promotion of the arts, with a common objective: responsible commitment to society.

The beneficiaries of the 2025 Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships are young people who have successfully completed their Baccalaureate or Advanced Vocational Training studies, but who have few university references in their immediate circle. In this second edition, **the number of applications received has increased**—specifically by 21.2% compared to last year—, and the candidates had an average grade of 8.67. Furthermore, **all the autonomous communities were represented and 73.8% of the total applications were submitted by women**—in access route 1, the first generation of university students, where both men and women could apply, 67.5% of the applications were from women—.

The new scholarship holders join the 12 selected in the first edition, shaping a community that grows and consolidates itself with each call and to which Occident Foundation will provide throughout their university journey with academic, personal and professional support aimed at fostering the development of their talent and their future employability.

"We believe that all the candidates have proven to be exceptional young people committed to their future, and now it is time to support the selected young people as far as they want to go. These scholarships are a springboard to achieving their academic and professional goals", stated Beatriz Sigüenza, Director of Fundació Balia and member of the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships evaluation committee.

The selection process includes academic excellence criteria that are weighted according to each applicant's financial income threshold, thus favouring students with fewer resources. The final decision is up to a **committee of professionals from the educational and social spheres that review each application** and include in the selection result their evaluation of the presentation videos and letters of recommendation submitted by the students.

The diploma award ceremony, the meeting point for the community of Jesús Serra scholarship holders

The **award ceremony of this 2nd edition of the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships** will be held on 3 October, when 12 young people will collect the diplomas certifying them as 2025 Jesús Serra scholarship holders. The session will be moderated by journalist and host **Marina Ribel**, and **Jaume Ripoll**, co-founder of FILMIN, will also be present during the event.

Support for students that goes beyond the financial realm

The aim of the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships is to provide young people with the necessary tools to complete their studies and, when the time comes, enter the job market. Therefore, in addition to financial support—they

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cover the tuition fee, include specific amounts for complementary training and teaching materials and offer a supplement linked to the family residence and income—this programme helps students acquire key skills to face the challenges of university life and build their first network of professional contacts.

One of these benefits is the **personalised mentoring programme**, which pairs each student with a professional in their field of study, and it has become the most valued by the scholarship holders. These mentors provide support to the scholarship holders throughout their university years, helping them improve their academic performance and advising them on various job and training opportunities.

The Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships also include a **training programme** with online and face-to-face sessions that focus on developing skills such as leadership, teamwork and communication. The next face-to-face session will take place on 3 and 4 October in Madrid, coinciding with the award ceremony of the scholarships' second edition. At this event, the 24 scholarship holders—12 from the first edition and 12 from the current one—will participate in practical workshops and activities designed to reinforce their academic and professional skills.

List of scholarship holders in the 2nd edition of the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships

Access route 1, first generation of university students



Dídak Camats. Born in Tàrraga, Lleida, Dídak has a great passion for mathematics and the physical laws that govern the universe. For this reason, he has decided to study for a Degree in Engineering Mathematics and Physics at Universitat Rovira i Virgili



Joel Buendía. From Zaragoza and with a deep interest in the chemical and molecular foundations of life. In order to better understand them, Joel studies Genetics at the Francisco de Vitoria University in Madrid.



María Pérez. Born in Salamanca, María has always been firm about her vocation: to become a teacher. Now, she is taking the first step toward fulfilling her dream by pursuing a Double Degree in Early Childhood and Primary Education at her hometown's university.

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Marta Márquez. From Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Marta wants to bring together her love of science and her vocation to help others. She is studying Medicine at the university in her city, with the aim of understanding the human body and putting her knowledge at the service of society.



Paula Lorenzo. From Madrid, Paula has always been fascinated by classical cultures, specifically their languages. To further explore and learn about them, she is studying Classical Philology at the Complutense University of Madrid.



Sofía Rosagro. Born in Murcia, Sofía dreams of working in humanitarian organisations to defend human rights and contribute to a fairer world. With this achievement in mind, she is studying a Double Degree in Law and International Relations at the University of Alicante.

Access route 2, second generation of women in STEM

Carla Villanueva. From Requena, Valencia, Carla has always understood the world through the prism of science. To further develop this view, she has decided to pursue a Degree in Data Science at the Polytechnic University of Valencia.



Daniela Rodríguez. Born in Tegueste, Tenerife, Daniela wants to bring together her two passions: science and education. That is why she is studying a Degree in Mathematics and Data Science at the Complutense University of Madrid, with her sights set on a future master's degree in teacher training so she can dedicate herself to teaching.

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Leonora Liria. From Aguadulce, Almería. Since she was a child, Leonora has been clear about her passion for science and technology. She has chosen to study Aerospace Engineering at the University of Seville, with the aim of designing and developing aircraft in the future.



Lucía Pérez. From San Pedro del Pinatar, Murcia, Lucía wants to devote herself to research in order to improve people's lives. The first step is to study Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of the Basque Country.



Min Guan. Born in China and resident in Arrecife, Lanzarote. She likes to use her knowledge of physics and mathematics to solve practical problems. Now, she wants to broaden her education in order to solve increasingly complex challenges, which is why she is studying a Double Degree in Computer Engineering and Mathematics at the Complutense University of Madrid.



Paola Zarzuri. From Pamplona, with a family tradition linked to carpentry, Paola is studying Industrial Design and Product Development Engineering at the University of Zaragoza. Her goal is to design innovative solutions by combining the creativity inherited from her family with her passion for technology.

Members of the evaluation committee in the 2nd edition of the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships



Alberto Bustos. Professor of Language and Literature Didactics at the University of Extremadura (UEx).

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Beatriz Sigüenza. Director of Fundación Balia.



José Antoni Crespo. Director of the Claudio Sánchez Albornoz Secondary Education Centre (Leon).



Laia Pérez. Head of post-compulsory education at the Education Consortium of Barcelona.



María Huertas. Project Director of Fundación Éxit.



Milagros Sáinz. Director of the Gender and ICT Research Group (GENTIC) at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC).

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