

## Fundación Occident launches the first edition of the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships

**These scholarships help students who want to be the first in their family to study at university, and students interested in being the first in their family to obtain a STEM degree.**

**Fundación Occident today opens the first call for the Jesús Serra scholarships**, named in honour of and in recognition for the work of its founder, who, with his pronounced humanitarian calling, promoted numerous programmes aimed at preserving the principle of equal opportunities.

For this reason, and after an intensive study to identify the main difficulties that students must overcome to access university studies first, and subsequently job offers adapted to each degree and specialist area, the Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships have been designed to support two specific groups, which define the two forms of access:

- **First generation of university students**, for students who want to be the first in their family to study at university. Statistics show that students whose parents hold university degrees are more likely to access higher education due to a number of advantages ranging from academic and financial support to the existence of people in their environment who can be a model to follow or can become their mentors.
- **First generation of women in STEM**, for students who want to be the first in their family to be qualified in a degree in the field of sciences, technology, engineering and/or mathematics. Although women account for 54.8% of all university students (INE 2020 data) in these specialist areas, less than 40% of adolescents are interested in one of the degrees related to these studies, and in certain STEM disciplines this percentage is only a little more than 20%.

In particular, the call offers **12 scholarships**, six in each access route, for **students in the last year of secondary education or higher education courses**, with a criterion of priority for people with functional diversity or special educational needs. Each scholarship covers the public cost of tuition at Spanish universities for face-to-face and full-time studies. In addition, the scholarship can be supplemented by other financial aid depending on family income and when the student does not live near a university centre.

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### About Fundación Occident

Fundación Occident, formerly Fundación Jesús Serra, is a non-profit organisation created in memory of Jesús Serra Santamans, a recognised entrepreneur and patron, and founder of GCO (Grupo Catalana Occidente). The Foundation promotes and supports initiatives in the fields of research, business and education, social action, sports and art and culture, all with a common objective: a commitment to social responsibility.

As a fundamental part of the programme, the Fundación Jesús Serra Degree Scholarships include a **mentoring and training programme**, with which the scholarship holders will be accompanied by a mentor throughout all their studies to overcome barriers and take advantage of opportunities that arise, and at the end of the studies, prepare for the leap to labour market or to postgraduate studies. To encourage participation in this programme, the scholarship also offers a complementary contribution linked to its use.

Federico Halpern, chairman of Fundación Occident, says that “with the launch of this Degree Scholarship programme, we hope to offer new educational opportunities and promote equal job opportunities for new generations of university students”, in this regard, Halpern also wanted to add value to the mentoring programme for the Degree Scholarships as “a differential value to help promote the professional career of the scholarship holders, through personalised sessions in which they can learn to develop their skills in the labour market”.

The aim is to support these students so they can be trained and accompanied to complete their university studies, which will allow them access to better paid jobs. According to data from the Labour Structure Survey (INE, 2018), the average salary of people with university studies is double that of people with basic studies. In the case of STEM professions, gender bias is particularly marked in access to and remuneration of senior positions, therefore the foundation wishes to contribute to improving gender equality in this area.

**The call will be last until 10 June 2024.** Applications must be made via the website: [www.fundacionoccident.org/becas-jesus-serra](http://www.fundacionoccident.org/becas-jesus-serra), where you can also find the terms and conditions of the programme and additional information.

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