



Interview ▶ The University of Andorra continues a new academic year with an eye on the exp



A.PONT  
The rector of the UdA,  
Miquel Nicolau.

## Miquel Nicolau

Rector of the University of Andorra

«In the administrative field we are weaker in terms of staff compared to other universities»

EL PERIÒDIC  
SANT JULIÀ DE LÒRIA  
@PeriodicAND

After eight years at the head of the rectory of the University of Andorra (UdA), Miquel Nicolau is still in what he considers his last term at the head of the institution after experiencing a remarkable increase in enrolled students for two consecutive years and a project ambitious expansion of university facilities.

### –How does the academic year start this year?

–With two important news. On the one hand, the expansion of the university announced a few weeks ago with a new space of 3,000 square meters which will be located in the same parish of Sant Julià de Lòria and which at the same time will allow us to develop and assume our growth over the next 20 years. Among the equipment of the project, it is planned to obtain new classrooms, recreation rooms and spaces for teachers, among others. On the other hand, the new increase in students reaching 674. We would have been happy if the number had remained the same without them dropping, but the numbers have positively surprised us.

### –What will the new building be used for?

–Well, some aspects of the project still need to be defined, but it will be dedicated to complementing classrooms and study rooms, new recreation and outdoor areas, and research and innovation spaces.

### –And will they have any special characteristics?

–They will be interchangeable buildings. This means that it can be closed in times of low traffic such as summer and can be opened depending on the spatial needs of the university and the number of people it has to accommodate.

### –What are the new features of this year's academic programs?

–As for regular training, this year we are incorporating the second year of the Master's in Education, which completes the Principality's three-year bachelor's and two-year master's course. We are also implementing the new study plan for the law master, in which two mentions will be differentiated. On the one hand, the branch oriented towards advocacy and, on the other, the mention facing other judicial careers such as

barristers and attorneys. In this case, the specific mention will appear in the final issue of the degree obtained. We are also launching the Advanced Professional Diploma in Accounting and Administration, which is a State degree that has been very successful with more than 30 students taking the course. Likewise, we celebrate the consolidation of the computer science degree, which has been developing the new skills-based curriculum for more than three years. Thus, one of the semesters is conducted in English and another is carried out abroad at a university that has an agreement with us.

### –It is increasingly common for universities to teach subjects in English.

–This directive has a double side. While we want to encourage the use and learning of a new language, it also serves to attract new students from abroad.

### –How do you notice the growth of students?

–Last year was the biggest increase in the university's history with a 15% increase. This year it was half, but we celebrate that the majority of these are international students, who have completed their uni-

versity studies outside of Andorra. Last year they went from representing 32% to 40% of the total.

### –And the staff who make the UdA work?

–The increase in students must be proportional to the number of administrative staff and technicians who oversee the functioning of the institutions. We have more than 300 collaborators, but in the administrative field we are lamer compared to

other European universities. It is a fundamental substrate for the UdA that needs to be consolidated.

### –What can you tell me about the university residence project?

–Everything goes well. We are entering responses from the initiative's feasibility surveys. Similarly, tests have already been carried out for students located in hotels. Personally, I think there is movement and there is a latent demand for this infrastructure. If we have a residence we will get more international students and it will also be beneficial to welcome teachers from outside and researchers who are on the move.

### –Do you stand, then, in favor of the co-living concept?

–Why not? The concept of co-working and co-living are not foreign to our temperament. Rather, we believe that it is a good initiative to create synergies not only between students, but also with companies and associations to consolidate a resistant fabric that contributes to diversification.

### –Do you think that the UdA is a point of reference for students in the Pyrenees area?

“

«Currently, we have 35 [nursing] places for pre-registrations that reach 150»

–Clearly. It is one of the central axes of education. Not only for the creation of research papers and the knowledge background. A study by Vives demonstrates the transversality of the institution and the facilities it offers the local population for their training. It is also a professional lift for those here and creates the possibility of retaining potential. The State invests in students with public money and this investment must obtain a return for the country in the form of talent.

**–What about the language?**

– We obviously protect Catalan. Despite this, we are flexible during the first year of the university career and allow subjects to be taken in one of the supporting languages that include Spanish, French, English and Portuguese. Once the beginning is over, you need to have a minimum level of Catalan to follow the academic training properly.

**–What impact does the university have on the parish and the country as a whole?**

–The impact can be even greater. Thanks to the establishment and consolidation of the UdA, there are four universities in Andorra. In com-

parison with Spain, this would mean that there should be 4,000 in the neighboring country to the south, but there are just over a hundred. It is a core of knowledge that creates economic and cultural synergies. There are more and more subjects and study modalities on offer. I am convinced that it has some impact on GDP. Although small, there are Spanish institutions such as the University of Salamanca that are essential sites for the social and economic dynamism of the regions where they are established and we want to follow this example.

**–To what extent do you want to take this growth?**

–We want to reach a size appropriate to the dimensions of the country. Personally, I think we can reach a number between 1,500 and 2,000 students. With the path to new degrees and options for specialization and masters, we are doing a very good job to reach our goals, and also to find more and more students interested in the subjects taught by our teachers. On the one hand, we favor the implementation of regulated training awarded by the State and, on the other, continuing training, which are UdA's own qualifications.



«The State invests public money in students and this investment must obtain a return for the country in a talent form»

«We would like to have access to Erasmus and Horizon 2020 as full partners for research and exchange opportunities»

I think you can double the numbers on both sides.

**–Is there a brain drain in the Principality?**

–There is a longing for an internal and, at the same time, international mission, because the goal is not to train young people so that they all go abroad afterwards. Everyone is free to go where they want, but the knowledge that the university promotes should return to the country internally.

**–What is the status of international agreements with other universities?**

–When I took up the position of rector, one of my main objectives was to put the UdA on the world map. Today, we have more than 40 agreements with universities and belong to several knowledge sharing and research networks. From outside the country, our internationalist temperament is also perceived more and more strongly.

**–Do you think the association agreement will facilitate the validation of degrees?**

– There are usually no problems in the educational space of all the countries that are part of the Council of

Europe. Another thing is the recognition of regulated professions in areas such as Health, Education and Law. In these cases, professionals must comply with the legislation of each country and approvals are required.

**–What is the UdA's claim within the framework of the association agreement?**

–We would like to have access to the Erasmus and Horizon 2020 programs as full partners and benefit from the exchange and research opportunities.

**–The Nursing course has always been promoted, but there is still a lack of cash in the sector.**

–There is still a shortage because the world needs many nurses to cover all the patients. It is a profession that requires a lot of training and opportunities for practice. Currently, we have 35 places for pre-registrations that reach 150.

**–What is your view of the country's private universities?**

– It is clear that there is competition. There are university businesses that are scary, but there is good harmony, as long as there are projects with faces and eyes. ≡

COMPANIES

# Grifols plummets in the stock market due to a lawsuit

A US judge fines the pharmaceutical company between 1,000\$ and 5,500 \$for each of the 54,000 affected

EL PERIÒDIC  
ESCALDES-ÈNGORDANY

Grifols does not overcome to the stock market. The latest scandal of the Catalan pharmaceutical lies in a collective lawsuit by 54,000 people who claim that the company has breached the Biometric Privacy Act of the State of Illinois, in the United States, by requiring them to provide their fingerprints for a study, which violated his fundamental rights. In addition, according to the plaintiffs, Grifols would not have destroyed this information and would have exceeded the specific purpose for which the data was recorded.

Accusations that the judge has deemed true and has imposed a fine on the pharmaceutical company that ranges from 1,000\$ to 5,000\$

for each person affected. But the situation could be even worse, because sources close to the case believe that the allegations could be extended to 100,000 people, a figure that would multiply the penalty up to 500 million dollars. This is precisely the reason why Grifols is once again «bleded» – in the words of economists – at the IBEX35, from where they look with skepticism at the plummeting of the company,

**In Ordino, a large crane can already be seen for the installation of a bridge that will lead to the new P3 laboratory**



▶▶ Aerial view of Prat de la Farga, where the Grifols laboratory must be placed.

EL PERIÒDIC

which has not recovered financially for months. So much so that a few weeks ago its president, Víctor Grifols, retired after two decades at the helm to give way for the first time in history to a non-Catalan person, the American Steven F. Mayer, and try to save the situation.

Beyond the financial disaster that this fine can mean for the company, you must take into account the bad publicity it gets for, on the one hand, having violated the privacy law and, on the other, for facing to their own donors. And all in the same week that in Ordino you can see a large crane for the installation of a bridge that will lead to the Prat de la Farga grounds, where Grifols will install its P3 laboratory in the Principality. ≡

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad