

Spin UOC 2021

Former Estrella Damm brewery, Barcelona

Vice President,
Director of the Ramon Molinas Foundation,
Members of the jury,
Entrepreneurs,
and a very special hello to everyone tuned in to the live stream,

Absolutes may have a place in childish thinking, totalitarianism and single-mindedness. But real life is full of nuances, complexities and many-sided truths. We have seen this in the wake of the pandemic, in the nuance that **lets us be happy to see each other again without forgetting the hardships we have overcome individually and together.**

In the complexity that allows us to grasp the far-reaching impacts of accelerated digitalization virtually across the board: from the economy to logistics, from personal relationships to entertainment, and from education to consumption and production. And, finally, in the many sides of every truth. Indeed, **technology comes with many benefits but also potential dangers.** We have witnessed this recently in the concentration of power in large conglomerates and the rise in local and global inequalities.

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For essayist Marta Peirano, **the solution does not lie in rejecting technology, but in taking action as citizens to ensure that the internet is "efficient and safe, resilient and free"**; and, for this to be so, we need four ingredients: "redundancy, transparency, globality and decentralization"¹. In short, we need more and better technology, among other reasons, to stitch up the rips and tears that weaken our economy and society and distance us from the horizon of equity and prosperity.

¹ Marta Peirano, "Un invisible cuello de botella", *El País*, 9 June 2021, <https://t.co/M26nkplmxD?amp=1>.

The UOC is in itself an instrument for bridging some of these divides. For instance, our model overcomes regional disparities by making quality higher education available across distances and geographical constraints. Out of every ten students residing in Spain, four live in urban areas with less than 50,000 inhabitants and two in towns of less than 10,000. **We strive not just to educate, but to transform, which necessarily means embracing, promoting and encouraging entrepreneurship throughout our institution.**

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We need to create opportunities for risk-takers, forward-thinkers, for those willing to answer tomorrow's questions and tread new paths. Our commitment to entrepreneurship is essential. It is a task that challenges us as a society and pushes us to come together. Because being competitive is only worthwhile if no one is left behind. **We can only guarantee that this new global, digital economy is also critical, environmentally friendly and committed to the 2030 Agenda if all our voices join in.** And by that I of course mean women's voices, too! The adaptability of our model certainly helps with this, as does adopting a gender perspective throughout the entire institution.

With respect to entrepreneurship, this has led to the inclusion of two workshops on gender mainstreaming within the general framework of Hubbik, our online incubator. But we still have room to improve. And we must improve. As Mayo Fuster, researcher and director of the recently created Barcelona-UOC Chair in Digital Economy, said, **"We must prevent the transition from factory to platform from representing a backwards step for women's rights"**². And not only rights, but women's prominence as well. Prominence in teaching, research and administration. Prominence in business creation and technology, to reach for the horizons of tomorrow together.

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No wealth can match the power of talent. And, at the same time, no wealth is better spread across the world than talent. Tapping into all this potential, not allowing even an ounce to go to waste, is more vital today than ever. **Giving this talent the chance to**

² Mayo Fuster, interview on 6 May 2021, <https://www.uoc.edu/portal/en/news/entrevistes/2021/017-mayo-fuster.html>.

thrive, nourishing its growth, should be a top priority for any university. It is certainly for the UOC! This year's SpinUOC, the ninth of its kind, is proof of this.

As of this evening we have eight new projects, each an example from its field of the drive to make positive change through technology, of entrepreneurship that envisages a better future through the lens of innovation.

A big thank you to everyone, and specially to our eight SpinUOC 2021 entrepreneurs.

Josep A. Planell