

## **History of the Alcalá University and the Law School**

The history of the University of Alcalá spans many centuries. It was founded in 1499 by Cardinal Cisneros, the regent of the King of Spain, as the site of his new educational project. However, Alcalá had been a site for higher education ever since the founding of a general study program by King Sancho IV in 1293. To establish the University of Alcalá, Cardinal Cisneros took the best features of traditional universities like those in Paris and Salamanca, and reconciled them with the latest innovations of the universities in Bologna and Leuven. It was founded at the top of the Renaissance, strongly influenced by the Humanist movement, and was envisioned as not only a place to educate clergymen to face the new ecclesiastical reforms, but also as a place to train the qualified civil servants needed to serve in the Spanish Kingdom. The success of the newly founded university made Alcalá become the new center for learning and thinking, one of the things that ushered in the Spanish “Siglo de Oro”, a golden age for Spanish art and culture. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the University of Alcalá became a prestigious center of academic excellence. The curriculum included instruction and study of great Spanish literary and cultural figures like Nebrija, Ignacio de Loyola, St. Juan de la Cruz, Lope de Vega, and Quevedo. The status and prestige of both its students and professors made the University of Alcalá a model to be followed by many of the new universities that were being founded in Latin America.

The 18th century, especially the latter third, was a critical time for university studies in Spain, since it underwent a great deal of reforms in the way and method of education. The Alcalá University, however, weathered the storm and remained as an important institution within the educational system. It even granted the first doctorate to a woman, Maria Isidra de Guzmán y de la Cerda, in that century. In the middle of the 19th Century, the University of Alcalá was moved to Madrid as part of a dismantlement process. However, the desire of reestablishing the University at Alcalá remained alive thanks to the “Sociedad de Condueños”, a group of Alcalá aristocrats who purchased the university buildings. The persistent desire of the Alcalá’s citizens to recover the historic university, along with a new support for education in Spain, allowed the University of Alcalá to open its doors once again in 1977. Since then, a collective effort done by administrators and staff has made possible the reclamation of an architectonic and past intellectual cultural heritage. On December 2nd, 1998, in recognition of the importance of the university, its historic contribution to the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and its wealth of beautiful buildings, UNESCO declared the University of Alcalá as a World Heritage Site. The modern University of Alcalá is committed to the promotion and diffusion of the Spanish language and culture. The most important Spanish Literature Award, the “Premio Cervantes”, is annually granted by the King of Spain in our auditorium. In addition, the Alcalá University has been constantly renovating and updating its facilities of Liberal Art, Sciences, IT, Medical School, Engineering and also its staff. The Alcalá University has spread out its influence beyond the Community of Madrid, at places like El Encin in Guadalajara as well as our own campus. Together with the Science and IT campus, our facilities constitute an important area of high tech innovations in our region.

The University of Alcalá is now one of the most prestigious public universities in Spain, with many professors who have been recognized both nationally and internationally for their researches. Also, our university is located in an important city (about 250,000 residents), close to Madrid (33 km.), to Guadalajara (30 km.), Barajas International Airport (17 km), and “Corredor del Henares”, that is an important industrial area. For all these reasons, our university has become an important center of international academic exchange. To become internationalized is a top priority for our institution now, and we are a renowned site for international studies, with both international students and their home universities.

### **History of the Law School**

The Law School is located in the old quarter of Alcalá de Henares, in the “Colegio Máximo de Jesuitas” building. It was built in the 17th century, and it is historically considered one of the main schools of the Jesuit order in Spain. Later, after being dismantled in 1836, it was converted into military barracks until 1990, when it was reverted back into an educational facility to house the recent reestablished University of Alcalá Law School. It is located on “Calle Libreros” and includes a large educational building and an impressive historic church.

Actually, the history of the Colegio Máximo de Jesuitas of Alcalá de Henares makes part of the own history of the University nailed in the Complutense area. At the end of fifteenth century, the Cardinal Jimenez de Cisneros became the most outstanding figure of Spain that left the Medieval Age and embarked on the great adventure of the Modern Age. The Alcalá University, with a major boost for the Renaissance would take its legacy to European countries, but that would not only extend to all the borders of Spain. Since then, the original trade mark of the literary and scientific works of the Alcala University would be a quality symbol which keeps its prestige until nowadays.

