

In memoriam

On May 4, 2026, Agustín Udías Vallina passed away at the age of 90. He was the recipient of this Foundation's Recognition Award for his scientific career in 2019. It is deeply painful for me to write in the past tense about a scientist I so greatly admired, whose advice, actions, and personal affection guided my own interest toward geophysical research. I met him in 1969; I had just completed my bachelor's degree in Physical Sciences, and he was beginning to validate in Spain the studies he had carried out in the United States. I have therefore been a witness to the immense work he accomplished within the Spanish university system, establishing a school of thought in Geophysics that had never existed before.

During the Foundation's Recognition ceremony, I spoke a few words in his presence. When the event concluded, he asked me to send them to him, confessing that he had liked them very much. For this reason, I repeat them here today, knowing that his memory will continue to cultivate the love for Earth Sciences that always illuminated his life.

"He began his university journey with studies in Philosophy and Geophysics at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, in the late 1950s, earning his doctorate in Geophysics from the same institution in 1964. Following his time as a Research Associate at the University of California, Berkeley, he studied Theology at the University of Frankfurt, where he also served as a visiting professor. After four years of teaching at the University of Barcelona, he moved to the Complutense University of Madrid, where he carried out the bulk of his teaching and research career, specializing and becoming an international reference in earthquake focal mechanism research.

He served as the principal investigator for numerous research projects, most notably the Deep Seismic Profiles Program within Spain's Geodynamic Project. This program marked the beginning of the research careers of a great number of students who, upon finishing their doctorates—which included research stays abroad—began filling the geophysics positions that Spanish universities and

various domestic research centers were starting to offer. This era, which began with that project and continued through subsequent ones, was the seed Professor Udías planted to bring Earth Sciences in Spain to its current state of excellence.

It is also necessary to highlight the positions he held throughout his intense scientific and teaching career, including: Vice Dean of the Faculty of Physical Sciences at the UCM, Director of the CSIC's Revista de Geofísica, CSIC Representative and coordinator of the European Science Foundation's European Geotransversal Program, Representative of the former Scientific and Technical Advisory Commission of the ECORS Program in the Pyrenees, President of the Subcommission for the Study of Focal Mechanisms and Earthquake Prediction of the European Seismological Commission (of which he was also Vice President), Director of the Journal of Seismology, corresponding academician of the Real Academia de la Historia, and numerous other significant roles in scientific and educational organizations that would be too lengthy to enumerate here.

In addition to a prolific scientific output in the most prestigious Earth Science journals, and geophysics and seismology textbooks that serve as reference works both nationally and internationally, his curiosity led him to another facet I wish to emphasize: his work as a researcher in the history of Physics and, particularly, Geophysics.

His membership in the Society of Jesus drove him to research the educational and scientific work carried out by Jesuits in Earth Sciences and astronomy worldwide, from the dawn of evangelization to the present day. Through a multitude of published works, he highlighted the diverse research facets the Society developed over the centuries. This humanistic vision of historical scientific advancements constitutes an enormous effort in documentation and the study of forgotten texts, showcasing the scientific profile the Society of Jesus always sought to imprint alongside its religious mission.

To conclude, I also want to express the gratitude of this Foundation—of which you were also a part—for the efforts you dedicated during its inception to make it a reality. I also want to express my personal admiration and gratitude for

showing me the inspiring paths that lead to research, being, as I believe I am by age, your very first student in Spain, though certainly not the best.

With this recognition of Professor Udías, the J. García Sñeriz Foundation wishes to show Spanish society its respect and admiration for his massive contributions to Earth Science research, and for having decisively contributed to creating a school of researchers and educators in Earth Sciences across Spain."