

A word from the Dean

The year is coming to an end, and it is time to summarise, but also to look ahead. This year has been characterised by a new university organisation and the planning of changes within the Faculty.

All the organisational changes that we have been working on throughout the year have now been decided on and will be implemented at the end of the year. The three 'white' biology departments will be merged into one new department, the Department of Molecular Biosciences, The Wenner-Gren Institute, and two of the 'green' ones will form the Department of Ecology, Environment and Plant Sciences. A centre for Baltic Sea research consisting of the Stockholm University Marine Research Centre (SMF) and the Baltic Nest Institute (BNI) will be established – this will highlight and strengthen Baltic Sea research at the Faculty. The Bert Bolin Centre for Climate Research will receive new management and an organisation that is better adapted to the phase the centre is now entering after a successful start-up period. We have also finally completed negotiations to take over the Institute for Solar Physics (ISF) from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. ISF, which operates the Swedish solar telescope on La Palma, will become a national facility supported by the Swedish Research Council. Furthermore, we welcome the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC) to the Faculty, and look forward to the increased opportunities for collaboration this entails. The SRC conducts research spanning the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, and it is important to maintain contacts between these disciplinary domains.

So what lies ahead for us? Apart from ongoing operations, with their problems and opportunities, there are several important issues in need of new ideas. One is the establishment of the new SciLifeLab, where research teams of EMBL/Max Planck type will be created. The universities are recruiting researchers who, with good resources, will spend 6-8 years with SciLifeLab before moving to a department. This is an opportunity for us to recruit top researchers, and we will now determine in which areas we want to recruit first.

The Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation has announced the second round of project funding and the first round of Wallenberg Academy Fellows this autumn. The Faculty did very well in both cases. We received three project grants as a main applicant, and were a co-applicant on another two. Three people nominated by the Faculty were selected as Academy Fellows – all in all, five out of ten University nominees were selected. When it comes to the European Research Council, we did worse this year – no grant, but two applicants received the highest rating.

The new university organisation is now a year old. I think it is working well. A major advantage is that the distance between the leadership of the University and the faculties has decreased. The views of the faculties are brought into the discussions early on. The working methods may not be completely refined yet, and I think it would be good to make a few adjustments. Compared to other universities, we have unusually short decision paths and an almost completely hierarchical organisation – which I think is wise. It has been a real pleasure this year to work with my colleague and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Astrid Söderbergh Widding, who is about to become Vice-Chancellor. I am confident that she will do very well in this position, but I am going to miss her as a colleague.

Sound cooperation within the Faculty management is of critical importance to my work. The fact that we are able to have discussions and make decisions rationally and confidently, even in difficult matters of distribution, is a tremendous strength – and to me a great pleasure. This good work is supported by a faculty office that cannot be praised enough. Combined with the skilled heads of department and directors in charge of the Faculty's units, this creates a strong and effective organisation. I want to thank all of you who are part of this for your work this year.

The Christmas holidays are almost here and I wish you all a pleasant time off!

Anders