

The autumn semester is here and the students have brought life to the campus once again. There have been changes to the Senior Management Team – Hans Adolfsson has taken office as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Joakim Malmström has been appointed as acting Director of Administration. In fact, we are all fairly new in our posts; I am, after a year and a half, already an elder. We have had our first meetings with the new management, and they bode well. I look forward to a constructive way of working, similar to our long-standing practices in the faculty management. It might be needed now as we take on crucial issues for the University's future, such as the expansion in Albano.

In the summer, Hans Adolfsson presented his report on the future organisation of the environmental chemistry/environmental science activities at the Faculty. He presented two options, one of which primarily entails merging analytical chemistry with MMK, while the other option entails the creation of a great department which would include ITM. The coming year will tell which option we choose.

Regardless of how we organise environmental chemistry/environmental science, coordination must take place in order to create the best possible education in the field. Such a discussion fits in well with the discussions we have started about the Faculty's education. So far, they have focused on two issues. One concerns whether to continue to provide the foundation year, and the other concerns how many introductory courses we should provide. I believe that introductory courses are an important part of our activities, but they have to keep a high academic standard, and the proportion of such courses cannot be too big. The foundation year is the largest science programme in the country, but is actually at the upper-secondary-school level. It enables students to acquire the qualification requirements for science studies, which is great, but is it our duty to provide this opportunity? The Ministry of Education has now announced increased opportunities to supplement upper-secondary-school qualifications within Komvux – perhaps we should leave it to them? Out of more than a hundred students who study the foundation year with us every year, we recruit about 20. To a large extent, we are training students for KI (which does not have a foundation year) and others. I look forward to us eventually also having discussions about prioritisation that focus more on what programmes we should provide. That will be a more difficult discussion.

All the evaluations by the National Agency for Higher Education/Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) have now been presented, and the overall result is good; we stand up well in comparison with the rest of the country. Some problems have been identified by UKÄ, however, and these will need to be rectified.

The Swedish Research Council has presented several new programmes lately. First, there is the government-initiated programme for recruiting internationally prominent researchers, which received new funds. Second, there are two selective, generous programmes for senior research positions and professorships ("rådsforskare" and "rådsprofessorer"). The actual programmes are good, but there is a great risk that they will drain the working committees of funds, thereby threatening our external funding system, project grants – strong applications must have a reasonable chance of being granted. ERC, KAW and VR currently give a lot of money to a small number of researchers. I am concerned that the balance is off. Broad research of high quality is important for the future; it is a prerequisite for the most highly specialised research. A house without a foundation is likely to fall.

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