

## Conferment Ceremony, Grand Auditorium, 31 January 2020

Your Grace,  
Mr County Governor,  
Fellow Vice-Chancellors and former Vice-Chancellors,  
Mr Chair of the University Board,  
Esteemed Honorary Fellow,  
Doctores Honoris Causa et Doctores Juvenes,  
Prizewinners,  
Colleagues, Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to our beautiful Grand Auditorium and to our twentieth Winter Conferment Ceremony. I welcome especially our promovendi, 84 new doctoral graduates and 17 honorary doctors, and our 13 prizewinners.

**Welcome also to our international guests. The part of the auditorium where Swedish is not the native language is steadily expanding. Our doctoral students from other countries become more numerous with every passing year. And anything that happens anywhere in the world affects us. We are an international university where the boundaries of knowledge have nothing to do with the lines on a map. Needless to say, in accordance with our Language Policy, we have made sure that my speech, which will continue in Swedish, is available in translation.**

Just before Christmas, the University Board adopted the University's new "Mission, Goals and Strategies" document. The document is more about the goals themselves – what the University wants to achieve and why – than about how to achieve these goals. This is a deliberate choice. The responsibility for creating the right conditions for education and research of the highest quality and relevance and for enhancing our capacity for renewal lies with the entire University. Giving the strategy concrete form is a matter for the operational level, the disciplinary domains, faculties and departments.

This presupposes a joint assumption of responsibility through collegial commitment, a positive staff culture and active student participation. I hope that everyone will want to help put our “Mission, Goals and Strategies” into practice. Together we can do it.

Two weeks ago I met today’s degree conferrers. I asked them what message they thought I should convey to you – today’s promovendi – in my welcoming speech here in the Grand Auditorium.

I received several exhortations and words of wisdom to pass on to you here today:

- Maintain and defend the credibility of science. Universities are dependent on trust.
- Stand up for fundamental ethical principles and democratic values.
- When it feels as if individualism is the religion of our time and you are stressed about finding your own way: remember that you become yourself in interaction with others.
- Moreover: feel proud that you have Uppsala University as your Alma Mater.

Resting on my shoulders is the Vice-Chancellor’s chain donated to the University by King Oscar II in 1877. The chain links up our faculties, just as the nine doctoral degree conferments are linked up in today’s ceremony. This illustrates the way in which you are all part of a context forming a whole – **universitas** – a **universitas magistrorum et scholarium** – a community of masters and scholars.

Through this ceremony, you all take your place in Uppsala University’s chain, forever linked to the University by your labours and dedication. Your degree conferrers will perform a final act of supervision as they carefully lead you over Parnassus. These few steps take you into the company of the masters. They take you from a before to an after.

Retain your curiosity, keep your critical eye, be faithful to knowledge and truth and may your Alma Mater remain close to your heart.

If you do that, my friends, you will be acting in line with the University’s highest goal: to contribute to a better world.

The University's continued development also depends on political commitments. In our input to the government's forthcoming research bill, we emphasised what is needed to give universities better conditions and to enhance research of the highest quality and relevance. Greater autonomy is required, and protection for the freedom of education. Compared with other European countries, Swedish universities have limited autonomy and this prevents us from acting in the best interests of education and research.

I joined with fellow vice-chancellors from most of the major Swedish higher education institutions, representatives of some of Sweden's leading companies and research funding bodies to write an article in the Uppsala newspaper UNT in December on the importance of a substantial investment in research for Sweden and a sustainable future. A national strategy for research infrastructure is necessary to give investments a long-term perspective, clarify responsibility and ensure better coordination, accessibility and pooling of resources.

Along with our students, we continue to strive for the removal of the standard productivity deduction, which has steadily reduced state funding per student. Knowledge takes time. This is the very message one of your degree conferrers wanted me to convey to you. It's a good insight to take with you.

Now I would like to thank you, doctoral graduates, for all your contributions. I would like to thank the prizewinners for their outstanding work and of course today's honorary doctors who further strengthen our University by your friendship and involvement. With these words, I wish you all a sincere welcome to the 2020 Winter Conferment Ceremony.

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