

# ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC RENEWAL OF EDUCATION IN CHALLENGING TIMES

## CALIE CONFERENCE REPORT

### CALIE PAPERS #10

This report gives a brief overview of the conference *Academic Leadership and Strategic Renewal of Education in Challenging Times* and the topics that were addressed during the presentations and panel discussions. It also aims at stimulating further conversation on academic leadership and renewal of education in times of change, and how the capacity of universities to meet current and future challenges can be reinforced.

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## Academic Leadership and Strategic Renewal of Education in Challenging Times

### *The CALIE conference: Academic Leadership and Strategic Renewal of Education in Challenging Times*

Rapid changes at the societal level place high demands on academic leadership and the ability to renew education. During the CALIE conference, May 18–19 2021, academic leaders at various levels as well as decision-makers and other stakeholders who work in, and shape, the landscape for higher education met and discussed academic leadership and strategic renewal of education. Both topics gained renewed relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Stockholm University hosted the CALIE conference which, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was held as a digital event.

The conference gathered experiences from the CALIE project—a collaboration between three American and four Swedish comprehensive research universities—and served as a platform for continued and reinforced cooperation.

### *The CALIE project*

In order to strengthen the potential for higher education and research to respond to pressing societal challenges and so-called ‘wicked problems’, the university leadership of four Swedish universities—Lund University, University of Gothenburg, Stockholm University and Uppsala University—joined together to explore the topics of academic leadership and renewal of education in the collaborative project CALIE: the Sweden-USA Project for Collaboration, Academic Leadership and Innovation in Higher Education. The project runs in collaboration with Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley, University of Washington and is funded from 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2021 by Vinnova, Sweden’s Innovation Agency.

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SWEDEN-USA PROJECT FOR  
COLLABORATION, ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP  
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Conference report  
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### *Participants*

The conference brought together more than 100 university leaders, researchers, research funders, students, and government representatives, as well as representatives from the private sector and the European Union. Participants came from Sweden, the United States and other parts of the world.

### *This report*

This report is designed to give non-attendees a brief overview of the conference and the discussions and research topics that were addressed during the presentations and panel discussions. We also hope to stimulate further conversation and debate on the topic of academic leadership and renewal of education in times of change as well as on how the capacity of universities to meet current and future challenges can be reinforced.

In addition to this report, video recordings from the conference are available at <https://calieproject.com/calieconference/>

The research to date—as summarized in the presentations that follow—highlights societal change and challenges facing higher education, similarities and differences between academia and university leadership in the United States and Sweden and the value of interdisciplinary and international collaboration.

## Welcoming remarks

### [Astrid Söderbergh Widding, President, Stockholm University](#)

The conference was opened by Astrid Söderbergh Widding, President at Stockholm University, who welcomed the participants to Stockholm University and the CALIE conference. Söderbergh Widding pointed to the truly international nature of the CALIE project and noted that international collaboration and exchange have been fundamental parts of higher education throughout history. She also underlined that in challenging times such as the present, characterized by rapid change and major crises including the climate crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions and threats to democracy across the world, higher education has a more important role than ever to play in society. To address today's challenges traditional disciplinary in-depth knowledge is still needed but transdisciplinary perspectives are just as necessary in order to prepare students, in the best possible way, for future challenges. Söderbergh Widding emphasized that even though the European Commission's and the Swedish government's interest in higher education should be viewed as positive, it also underscores the importance for higher education institutions to reflect together on their common mission, innovation in higher education, the role of higher education in society and the question of sustainable development. Söderbergh Widding concluded by saying that 'We need to set our own agenda and define our own key role in building the society for tomorrow'.

### [Henric Johnson, Swedish Science and Innovation Counselor to the United States at the Embassy of Sweden in Washington, D.C.](#)

Henric Johnson thanked the participants in the CALIE project for strengthening the relations between the United States and Sweden. Describing the countries as two superpowers when it comes to science and innovation, Johnson pointed out that the United States and Sweden have a long history of successful scientific collaboration in several interdisciplinary areas. He also noted that the Embassy of Sweden in Washington, D.C. considers CALIE as one of their flagship projects. According to Johnson, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that nations, leaders and scientists around the world can act quickly and decisively when faced with a common threat. Adding to this, Johnson noted that we should not forget, however, that the rapid development of vaccines was due to multidisciplinary efforts involving basic and applied science and decades-long collaboration between industry and academia. Academic leadership and the renewal of education are key issues for today's universities, Johnson argued, pointing to the need to continue educating future leaders who support democratic values, human rights and the integrity of societal models. While humanity faces some of the greatest challenges ever with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, Johnson asserted that the new Biden administration deeply values listening to science. According to Johnson, this political climate, together with massive financial investments in infrastructure and innovation, means that the possibility to enhance the relations between Sweden and the United States has never been brighter.

### [Sylvia Schwaag Serger, Deputy Vice-Chancellor 2018–2020, Lund University](#)

Sylvia Schwaag Serger, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Lund University 2018–2020, provided background to the CALIE project, describing how the project sprung from the turbulence of our present times and the firm belief that universities are the anchors of our society. Schwaag Serger brought attention to the notion that universities are places we look to in troubled times, for enlightenment and for assurance that our societies will be resilient in the future. Schwaag Serger described how the purpose of the CALIE project was to discuss and initiate exchange between individuals in different academic institutions that were engaged in the organization and running of universities in Sweden and the United States. ‘We wanted to hear their thoughts, their views on the challenges they faced and understand how the universities responded to technological disruption, climate change and other major societal changes’, Schwaag Serger explained. Schwaag Serger also noted the tendency to focus on either national or global contexts and argued that the CALIE project, instead, was an opportunity for two countries and academic institutions in very different systems to have in-depth exchange concerning academic leadership, strategic renewal of education and societal challenges.

### [Setting the scene](#)

#### [Darja Isaksson, Director-General, Vinnova](#)

Darja Isaksson, Director-General of Sweden’s innovation agency Vinnova, discussed how academic institutions are foundational building blocks of society and that it is through the pursuit of knowledge that an unprecedented number of individuals have been provided with opportunities to prosper. According to Isaksson, this cohort now shares the common task and urgent goal of transforming society in a socially sustainable way so that future generations also have the opportunity to prosper. Such a transformation, Isaksson stated, requires academic leadership in order to succeed. Noting the key importance of transdisciplinary perspectives in the pursuit of knowledge and innovation, Isaksson further argued that crucial ethical and social perspectives must be deeply integrated into policy as well as technological innovation in order to provide necessary societal outcomes. Isaksson emphasized that in order to accelerate this work we must work together across disciplinary lines and sectors, as well as geographical borders. She also clarified that while it is not Vinnova’s place to tell academia what to do, Vinnova can provide opportunities for those who are willing to explore, work and lead the way forward together in trying out new ideas and solutions to the urgent challenges of our time. Isaksson summarized her presentation by thanking the CALIE project for the leadership that CALIE is actively providing and for exploring the path forward for academic leadership and innovation in education in order to usher in a new, sustainable era.

#### [Erik Renström, Vice-Chancellor, Lund University](#)

Erik Renström, Vice-Chancellor at Lund University, began his presentation by pointing to the current academic megatrend; that is, the increased societal demand for academic disciplines to provide multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary spaces for knowledge creation. According to

Renström, this trend affects all scientific disciplines. Yet, he added, it is not likely that disciplines will disappear because in order for a scientist to excel in his or her profession he or she will need to become highly specialized. Renström also pointed to the need for creating new educational spaces adapted to a more diverse set of audiences and the need to create educational programs that are truly multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. In the aftermath of Covid-19, he argued, it is clear that the campus will remain at the heart of the university, at the same time as remote learning will be an essential ingredient in future on-site teaching. Digital tools, Renström added, must be used to enhance learning on campus and improve the quality of education. Renström stated that higher education is being challenged to make use of the entire academic palette, a future which will require visionary yet distinct academic leadership.

## Universities and disruptive change – the strategic renewal of education in challenging times

[Digitization and strategic renewal of higher education. Mitchell Stevens, Professor of Education and, by courtesy, of Sociology, Stanford University](#)

Stevens pointed out that in order to understand the transition that universities are going through today theoretical knowledge regarding what kinds of institutions universities actually are is needed. As noted in *Digitization and Strategic Renewal of Higher Education* (Mitchell L. Stevens & Mikael Börjesson, 2021) the core functions of universities include producing knowledge, preserving knowledge and transmitting knowledge. In distinguishing between academic digitization and digitalization, Stevens clarified that academic digitization concerns the transition from production of knowledge in lexical media to numerical media. It also refers to the preservation of knowledge via digital media rather than print and to the mediation of instructional and other scholarly interactions via digital media rather than face-to-face. Digitalization, in turn, concerns the question of how organizations respond to digitization. According to Stevens, the current digital transformation is as fundamental as industrialization was and, moreover, that the implications of the shift from production of knowledge in lexical media to numerical media has at least four implications:

1. The power and status of university personnel who produce knowledge through words is diminished relative to those who produce knowledge through numbers.
2. The status of knowledge preservation has been almost entirely evacuated from universities.
3. Physical co-presence should not be presumed for teaching and mentoring. The separation of universities from the rest of life continues to erode.
4. Universities have new competitors when it comes to knowledge production, preservation and transmission in the shape of organizations such as Facebook, Google and Amazon.

With regards to the last implication, Stevens argued that universities are not organized to cooperate or compete with knowledge-producing organizations of this scale and influence. He

stated that one of the most important challenges for universities is to determine what their relationship to these new knowledge-producing organizations is and will be.

Mitchell Stevens' presentation was based on Mitchell L. Stevens & Mikael Börjesson (2021) *Digitization and strategic renewal of higher education* in Schwaag Serger, Malmberg & Benner (eds). *Renewing higher education: Academic leadership in times of transformation*, Lund: Lund University, pp. 91–111.

### **How do universities handle disruptive change? Tools and strategies. Mark Richards, Provost & Executive Vice President, University of Washington**

Mark Richards, Provost & Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs, University of Washington, outlined four important issues facing universities today. Firstly, the advent of data science across the entire university. Richardson explained how many of the careers that students at the University of Washington pursue are enhanced by, and sometimes require, data science and programming, noting that, 'this is the new Esperanto of academic life'. To meet this new demand the University of Washington has instituted new programs in data science for students who do not major in science and engineering, so that any student that pursues their passion, whether it is in philosophy or anthropology, can still graduate and be prepared for the increasingly data driven job market. Secondly, Richards brought attention to the decolonization of the schema of university life and structure and the recognition that many universities are founded on colonial traditions. Changing this, according to Richards, will be challenging and sometimes painful, but should also be energizing and ultimately liberating, making universities and research much more valuable to humanities as a whole. Thirdly, Richards raised the question of skills versus degrees. As knowledge is increasingly easy to access through search engines such as Google, universities are becoming less knowledge-oriented. Instead, university education today is more skills-based and focused on critical thinking. Richards further emphasized the value of college as a liberating experience where young people can explore who they are and what they want to become. Fourthly, Richards discussed the question of students returning to campus in person post Covid-19. He described how Washington University addressed the issue by focusing on safety, pedagogy and community. Here, an important pedagogical question was how learning could be enhanced with the new digital tools that were used during the Covid-19 era. Richards predicted that a general affirmation of the value of community at the university would emerge after the pandemic.

**The future of higher education – Covid-19 and increased digitalization. Fredrik Jonasson, Uppsala Union of Engineering and Science Students, Uppsala University. Eva Wiberg, Vice-Chancellor, University of Gothenburg**

Eva Wiberg and Fredrik Jonasson discussed the impact of Covid-19 and increased digitalization for universities from leadership and student perspectives.

*Teaching and training*

Wiberg and Jonasson asserted that the Covid-pandemic had a massive impact on methods of training and research in higher education. They noted that the pandemic has accelerated processes of digitization and digitalization of higher education and that the higher education sector has responded to this rapid shift with hard work and creativity. Wiberg and Jonasson anticipated the continued use of hybrid and mixed learning methods following the end of the pandemic. They pointed out that while remote education provides students with new opportunities, such as taking courses at universities far from home, universities need to be mindful of the additional burden remote learning may imply for certain students. Wiberg and Jonasson also noted that these developments call for solid technical solutions, especially when it comes to combining campus teaching and remote teaching.

*Health among students and staff*

Wiberg and Jonasson further discussed how the Covid-19 pandemic affected the wellbeing of students and staff in higher education. Challenges discussed included finding a study-life balance and work-life balance for students and staff respectively. Wiberg and Jonasson also noted that since many students live alone, they increasingly have had to deal with the problem of isolation. Factors such as these have led to an increase in students seeking support from student health care services and student counselor teams. According to Wiberg and Jonasson, the pandemic has underlined the value of community as well as shed light on the need to be prepared for future remote education and blended learning situations.

*Internationalization*

Wiberg and Jonasson argued that the ongoing digital transformation involves new possibilities when it comes to providing students with an international outlook. They noted that while the Covid-19 pandemic may have decreased travelling momentarily, the interest and will to travel among students is still strong. According to Wiberg and Jonasson, the challenge that lies ahead is to find sustainable ways to enable international collaboration and exchange, specifically through the use of digitalization.

## The ability of universities to meet current and future challenges

### Academic leadership in American universities. Francisco Ramirez, Professor of Education and, by courtesy, of Sociology, Stanford University

Francisco Ramirez, Professor of Education and, by courtesy, of Sociology, Stanford University, reflected on differences between higher education in the United States and higher education in other parts of the world. Ramirez pointed out that a signifying feature of American higher education is that it emerged and developed in a highly competitive environment with private and public universities competing with each other. Another characteristic of American universities noted by Ramirez is that they are deeply involved in society. The leadership in American universities differs from the leadership in other parts of the world in that the leadership is not elected and in that it deals both with issues of scholarship and issues of economic survival. American universities are also characterized by the early rise of development offices that may now be found in almost all American universities, which are dedicated to the question of raising and maintaining revenue. Another hallmark of American universities is the steady growth of diversity and inclusion offices and the rise of legal offices.

Francisco Ramirez' presentation was based on Francisco Ramirez (2021) *Academic Leadership in American Higher Education* in Schwaag Serger, Malmberg & Benner (eds). *Renewing higher education: Academic leadership in times of transformation*, Lund: Lund University, pp. 536–9.

### Academic leadership in Swedish universities. Mats Benner, Dean, School of Economics and Management, Lund University

Mats Benner, Dean at the School of Economics and Management at Lund University, put forward the following key points regarding academic leadership in Swedish universities. He described the development of Swedish university governance as moving 'from productive contradiction to hectic ambivalence'. According to Benner, Swedish university governance has historically been characterized by state governance and stringent regulation. At the same time, universities have had certain maneuvering space and displayed quasi market behavior. Academic entrepreneurship and academic leaders who forge specific institutional pathways, Benner argued, have in fact been a central dimension of Swedish universities for a long time. This understanding of university governance, as a hybrid between state and market governance, contradicts the notion of Swedish universities as solely governed by the state. Benner further argued that the current situation involves ambivalence on two levels. On the one hand, the stringent regulations of the past have been replaced by expectations on universities to act as organizations that forge their own directions and engage in competitive research. On the other hand, the political system still puts pressure on universities. For example, the most recent government policy bill included thirty prioritized areas that universities are expected to respond to. Brenner described the current situation for Swedish universities as 'hectic ambivalence', where those working in universities adapt to new expectations to compete for funding, thereby creating a very resource-efficient academic system. However, despite expectations of flexibility and adaptability, Benner noted that the decentralized strategies of individuals and groups within universities differ from the stated

focus and prioritizations of the universities. In addition, Benner suggested, universities respond to external stimuli rather than internal considerations. Benner concluded by noting that the current Swedish university model is flexible yet slightly vague and ambivalent and raised the question of the model's capacity for sustainable transition and adaptability to changing social and environmental conditions.

Mats Benner's presentation was based on Mats Benner, Anders Malmberg & Sylvia Schwaag Serger (2021) *Academic Leadership for University Renewal* in Schwaag Serger, Malmberg & Benner (eds). *Renewing higher education: Academic leadership in times of transformation*, Lund: Lund University, pp. 71–87.

### Universities in times of turbulence and transformation (panel discussion)

Sarah Church, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Stanford University

Mattias Goksör, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Gothenburg

Clas Hättstrand, Vice President, Stockholm University

Anders Malmberg, Deputy Vice-Chancellor 2012-2020, Uppsala University

Jeffrey M. Riedinger, Vice Provost for Global Affairs, University of Washington

Linda Rugg, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, University of California, Berkeley

Moderator: Sylvia Schwaag Serger, Deputy Vice-Chancellor 2018-2020, Lund University

Several questions that emerged due to the Covid-19 pandemic were highlighted during the panel discussion. One of the topics discussed was the question of planning for a new kind of life on university campuses after Covid-19, including calculating how many students would return to campus and how many would continue the path of remote learning. The American participants in the panel discussion also noted that the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted tensions and problems such as the fraught financial situation of students and their families. Many students found themselves in difficult financial situations due to the pandemic and had to face issues such as housing and food insecurity. High expectations were placed on universities to provide support, and they responded by creating food banks and developing new kinds of financial support opportunities. At the same time, American universities were faced with the question of diversity, contests over resources between social groups and calls for social justice sparked by the death of George Floyd. Linda Rugg, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, University of California Berkeley, concluded by saying that 'The face of the university is going to change, both in terms of how people's work-life balance looks and also in terms of who the people are who are empowered on the university campus. We are going to have to try to change our culture.'

During the panel discussion differences and similarities between universities in the United States and Sweden were also considered. It was noted that an important difference between the countries stems from the different economic and governance models in the two countries. The different models were advanced as one explanation for the comparatively close relation between research and teaching in higher education in the United States as compared to Sweden. The panelists also underscored that another striking difference between Sweden and

the United States was that the level of tension in society was much higher in the United States and that this affected the universities. Student activism, diversity, economic stress and political tension exist in Sweden as well, but to a much lower degree. Panelists also discussed similarities between the two countries, especially with regards to how universities dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic. Panelists found that seizing the opportunity to accelerate change was a prominent feature of both countries during the pandemic. Finally, a main takeaway from the panel discussion was the importance of maintaining and strengthening international collaboration.

### Universities and wicked problems: Opportunities for transatlantic collaboration. Robert Strand, Executive Director for the Center for Responsible Business at Berkeley Haas, University of California, Berkeley

Robert Strand, Executive Director for the Center for Responsible Business at Berkeley Haas, University of California, Berkeley, discussed how fragilities of American society were exposed during the Covid-19 pandemic. He asserted that as the need for change in American society was recognized during the pandemic many Americans looked to Scandinavia for inspiration and knowledge concerning societal change. Strand mentioned that one pressing societal challenge is sustainability, an area in which Sweden and other Nordic countries are doing relatively well according to sustainable development goal index figures. Strand also raised the issue of wicked problems. He argued that such problems demand cross-disciplinary approaches and that universities play an essential role in fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration. Universities may also serve as platforms for social justice movements which can foster and cultivate common directives for positive change. With the need for common platforms in mind, Strand proposed the establishment of a Nordic center at Berkeley which could serve as a continuation of the work of CALIE.

Roberts Strand's presentation was based on Robert Strand (2021) *Tackling the Wicked Problems of the Sustainable Development Goals, Together* in Schwaag Serger, Malmberg & Benner (eds). *Renewing higher education: Academic leadership in times of transformation*, Lund: Lund University, pp. 329–343.

### Closing remarks. Erik Renström, Vice-Chancellor, Lund University

Erik Renström, Vice-Chancellor, Lund University, summed up the first day of the conference. He brought attention to the fact that some of the challenges that lie ahead are questions that universities have dealt with in the past but on a different scale. As examples, Renström mentioned the loss of monopoly on knowledge and the shift from a knowledge-oriented to a skills-oriented curricula. Renström also noted that while there are many similarities between Swedish and American universities there are also differences. One aspect that sets Sweden and the United States apart is the weaker connection between research and teaching at Swedish universities. Renström concluded by summing up key issues that that were discussed during the conference. These issues included the importance of digitalization in education, the question of what a campus will be in the future, the question of how internationalization can

be advanced in sustainable ways and the importance of equal opportunities, decolonization and gender equality at universities.

## Swedish universities and strategic renewal

Eva Wiberg, Vice-Chancellor, University of Gothenburg, welcomed the participants to the second day of the conference and reflected on key points from the first day of the conference. The overarching theme for the second day of the conference was possibilities and constraints for Swedish universities concerning strategic renewal of education. Key points are summarized in the following text.

### [The 60-Year Curriculum. A lifetime of learning. Rovy Branon, Vice Provost, Continuum College, University of Washington](#)

Rovy Branon, Vice Provost, Continuum College, University of Washington provided an overview of how Washington University frames a lifetime of learning through the lens of the 60-Year Curriculum. Continuum College, University of Washington, provides learning from the ages 8 to 98+ years. They have created the 60-Year Curriculum in response to new imperatives for lifelong learning. In today's society, the labor market requires more education and civil society is increasingly fractured, which in part stems from a lack of broad-based education. Due to demographic changes, institutions will have to start serving older learners in order to survive. Technological development requires continuous learning, as does the fact that life expectancy has changed. As explained by Branon, Continuum College, University of Washington, focuses on the following five key areas when working with the 60-year curriculum.

1. The meta-curriculum, a type of portfolio that is individually adjusted and has multiple specializations and credentials.
2. Digital credentials, which will make it possible to move students' data in a more flexible way.
3. The new academic-technology stack, which involves, for example, scaled and highly differentiated learning management systems, new ways to consider physical space, AI and credential systems.
4. New kinds of learner services such as enrollment services, retention specialists and career coaches for lifelong learning.
5. The need for changes in funding and policy. Examples include the question of how student loans and debt should be handled with regards to lifetime learning and the issues of access and affordability when privatized educational opportunities are growing.

Rovy Branon's presentation was based on Rovy F. Branon (2021) *The 60-Year Curriculum and The University of Washington: Continuum College and Lifelong Learning* in Schwaag Serger, Malmberg & Benner (eds). *Renewing higher education: Academic leadership in times of transformation*, Lund: Lund University, pp. 113–128.

## Lifelong learning and future skills supply

### **Emil Högberg, Secretary of State, Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation**

Emil Högberg, Secretary of State at the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation provided a government perspective on lifelong learning and skills supply. Högberg emphasized that lifelong learning and skills supply are central societal challenges and crucial questions for the Swedish government. He explained that the government works with these issues in several ways. Firstly, lifelong learning and skills supply occupies a central part in the Swedish research and innovation proposition. The government also continues to support the development of adult education, labor market training and higher education. Högberg drew attention to the fact that access to education for lifelong learning and skills development will become increasingly important for the welfare and business sectors in Sweden. According to Högberg, the future labor market, which will be characterized by digitalization and an older workforce, will place demands on higher education to assume responsibility for skills development. Högberg concluded by saying that higher education needs to develop both educational organization and content for lifelong learning in order to meet the increased demand for education.

### **Magnus Wallerå, Head of Department for skills supply, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise**

Magnus Wallerå highlighted that it has become increasingly difficult for Swedish companies to find employees with the right competence and qualifications. According to Wallerå, skills supply is one of the most pressing challenges for the Swedish business community and lack of competence has become a major obstacle for company expansion. Wallerå also argued that Swedish business is undergoing a structural transformation driven by digitalization and technological development; a transformation that will lead to significant changes in the labor market, as some jobs disappear while new kinds of jobs are created. Given the rapidly changing labor market, the need for lifelong learning increases. Wallerå emphasized that this is important for the individual as well as for the Swedish business community, noting that higher education will have an increasingly important role to play in the education of professionals and lifelong learning. Wallerå explained that the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise perceived a need for increased government funding for lifelong learning and an intensified dialogue between higher education and the business community concerning education for professionals.

### **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, European Commission**

Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+ at the European Commission, set forth the European Commission's perspectives on lifelong learning. Eriksson Waterschoot brought up two European Union proposals in which skills supply and lifelong learning were important aspects; the updated industrial strategy and the Porto social summit concerning social targets. Eriksson Waterschoot pointed out that the proposals underscore that the European Commission values a good educational foundation for all in the beginning of life as well as investments in excellence. Eriksson Waterschoot explained how, from a European

perspective, enhanced flexibility in education, such as the possibility of part-time studies and the combination of on-campus and digital learning, is important since knowledge and competencies have to be updated throughout the life course and education must adjust to the needs of the labor market. Education, Eriksson Waterschoot argued, also needs to accommodate a more diverse group of students with respect to factors such as age and experience. Therefore, higher education should assume an active role in competence development and retraining of the workforce in Europe. As outlined by Eriksson Waterschoot, the European Commission supports higher education in this process in several ways, one of them being the European Universities Initiative. The European Commission is also establishing a strategy for higher education and a proposal concerning micro-credentials in order to enhance flexible and inclusive learning opportunities. Eriksson Waterschoot concluded by stating that lifelong learning should be part of the universities 'new DNA'.

#### **A European perspective. Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, European Commission**

Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, European Commission, presented three European initiatives of particular importance for higher education: the preparation of an EU strategy for higher education, the European Universities Initiative and the new Erasmus+ program. The EU strategy for higher education supports closer connections between different parts of Europe and different universities in Europe while also taking into account diverse local and institutional contexts in the member countries. Key issues that have been advanced in the development of the strategy is the need to prioritize collaboration over national borders, innovation, digital and sustainable solutions, internationalization of higher education, high ethical principles and the question of how higher education can contribute to employability. The European Universities Initiative (a pilot project) is a flagship initiative for cooperation across borders aimed at encouraging mobility. Currently the initiative consists of 41 alliances and 300 universities. The new Erasmus + program has received a higher budget and the program is developing in a sustainable, inclusive, digital and international way.

#### **European universities as a tool for renewal of higher education: What do Swedish universities want? Dan Andrée, Senior Advisor, Stockholm Trio**

Dan Andrée, Senior Advisor of Stockholm Trio (Karolinska Institutet, KTH and Stockholm University) provided a description of the European Universities Initiative. The initiative was founded in 2017 and aims to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education and bring Europeans together. Alliances within the European Universities Initiative should include partners from all types of higher education institutions and cover a broad geographic scope across Europe. The alliances should be based on a long-term strategy focused on sustainability, excellence and European values and students should be offered a student-centered curricula. Andrée noted that Swedish universities participate in the initiative to a relatively high extent, presently taking part in 11 alliances. From a Swedish perspective, aspects of the initiative that could be developed further is the extent to which participation in the

initiative is academically meriting, the issue of government funding and the possibility of extending cooperation within and beyond Europe. There is also, according to Andrée, a need for the Swedish government to be more active in developing the next phase of the initiative. Sweden has a strong position when it comes to quality, lifelong learning, gender equality and, not least, student influence. André concluded by asserting that he is optimistic concerning the possibility of enhancing European cooperation through the European Universities Initiatives.

Dan Andrée's presentation was based on Dan Andrée (2021) *A European University – a Renewal of Education?* in Schwaag Serger, Malmberg & Benner (eds). *Renewing higher education: Academic leadership in times of transformation*, Lund: Lund University, pp. 129–165.

### Are we well prepared for the future – poised or intimidated? Eva Åkesson, Vice-Chancellor, Uppsala University 2012–2020

Eva Åkesson, Vice-Chancellor, Uppsala University 2012–2020, discussed the issues of autonomy and leadership in higher education. Åkesson pointed to the tension between autonomy and external governance of higher education, noting that while there is a rhetoric and ideal concerning the autonomy of higher education, it is also subject to external influence. This appears to be the Janus face of the university but, as Åkesson pointed out, in some cases there is room for universities to take action and govern to a greater extent than what actually occurs. Åkesson proposed that the four Swedish universities involved in the CALIE-project develop a pilot project for a new public rights form concerning autonomy for the universities. According to Åkesson, 'There is a need for increased independent responsibility today in order to conquer greater power of action tomorrow and we cannot wait for someone else to do it for us'.

### Panel discussion

Julia Nyberg, Vice President, Student Unions, University of Gothenburg

Ingrid Petersson, Director General, Formas

Johan Rockberg, KTH, Young Academy of Sweden

Astrid Söderbergh Widding, President, Stockholm University

Moderator: Anders Malmberg, Deputy Vice-Chancellor 2012–2020, Uppsala University

The panel discussion concerned the extent to which Swedish higher education is ready for renewal and how education may be developed. Main points in the discussion included how the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated an existing strong capacity for renewal within higher education and that university leadership plays a pivotal role in facilitating change. However, renewal of education demands enhanced economic resources so that teachers can devote time to educational development. The need for interdisciplinary cooperation was raised during the discussion as well as the importance of taking into account various backgrounds and experiences among students. A key issue advanced in the discussion was the need to develop university-wide digital platforms and to consider students' user experiences in order to meet the high expectations on digital solutions among students today.

### Concluding remarks. Anders Hagfeldt, Vice-Chancellor, Uppsala University

In his concluding remarks, Anders Hagfeldt, Vice-Chancellor at Uppsala University, thanked the participants of the CALIE-conference, the CALIE-project and the authors of the CALIE anthology *Renewing Higher Education: Academic leadership in times of transformation*. Hagfeldt asserted that the lessons learnt from the CALIE-project are valuable for the continued development of education and research, cooperation between higher education and business and for future international collaboration. Hagfeldt emphasized that while the CALIE conference concluded the CALIE-project it should also be perceived as a platform for further collaboration.

## Conclusions and Ways Forward

The following concluding points may be drawn from the two conference days of presentations and panel discussions. As pointed out during the conference, there are major societal challenges and changes that higher education needs to respond to.

### Digital transformation

Current digital transformation has far-reaching implications for higher education and it changes the role of universities as knowledge producers, preservers and transmitters. In these capacities, universities face new competitors in the form of organizations such as Facebook, Google and Amazon. Digitization also means that physical presence in teaching can no longer be taken for granted in higher education. As underscored by the rapid shift to remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, digitization raises questions about the future role of the university community and campus. During the conference the need to take into account the changing role of the university in an increasingly digitalized society was discussed, as were the questions of ensuring solid technical solutions and incorporating students' digital user experiences in educational development.

### Lifelong learning

There are several new imperatives for lifelong learning in today's society, including the need for continuous education due to longer life expectancy and rapid technological change. The changing demands of the labor market also create a call for continuous learning, where skills supply is a pressing issue for both the public and the private sector. In addition, due to demographic changes, universities will have to start serving older learners in order to stay relevant. There was an agreement at the conference that higher education should assume an active role in retraining the workforce and with regards to lifelong learning initiatives. Therefore, higher education needs to develop both educational organization and content for lifelong learning.

### Diversity

A main takeaway message from the conference was the importance of diversity in higher education and the need to develop inclusive educational environments for students with various backgrounds. The question of enhanced flexibility in education, such as the possibility of part-time studies and of combining campus and online studies was also brought up in several

discussions during the conference. Diversity was a particularly topical issue for the American universities due to protests sparked by the death of George Floyd.

### Sustainability

Environmental and social sustainability are key issues for higher education. Higher education has an important role to play in transforming society in a socially sustainable way and such transformation requires leadership from academia as well as transdisciplinary and international collaboration. However, international collaboration needs to be developed in a sustainable way, drawing on the advantages and possibilities of digitalization, in order to ensure a low carbon footprint.

### Academic leadership

Challenges and changes such as the ongoing digital transformation and calls for enhanced sustainability, diversity and lifelong learning in higher education underline the importance of renewal of education and academic leadership. Both leadership in American higher education and in Swedish higher education were analyzed during the conference. A signifying feature for American higher education is that it has emerged and developed in a highly competitive environment where private and public universities compete with each other. The leadership in American universities differs from the leadership in other parts of the world as the leadership is not elected and in that the leadership deals both with issues of scholastics scholarship and issues of economic survival. While Swedish university governance has in the past been characterized by state involvement and stringent regulations, universities are currently expected to forge their own directions and engage in competitive research. At the same time, the political leadership in Sweden continues to put pressure on universities. In order to address the question of autonomy among Swedish universities it was proposed that the four Swedish universities involved in the CALIE-project initiate a pilot project focused on the development of organizational forms for university autonomy.

### Collaboration

During the conference there was agreement regarding the importance of continued and enhanced collaboration and exchange of knowledge within higher education, as well as between higher education and other actors in society, not least the private sector. In the presentations and panel discussions, the importance that higher education institutions reflect together on their common mission and role in society was emphasized, as was the need for strengthened multi- and transdisciplinary collaboration and international collaboration. Current initiatives such as the European Universities Initiatives underscore the value of cooperation across borders. With the need for common international platforms in mind the establishment of a Nordic center at Berkeley, which could be a continuation of the work of CALIE, was proposed. Finally, it was stressed that even though the CALIE conference marked the conclusion of the CALIE-project it should also be perceived as a platform for further international collaboration.