

Report of the University Advisory Board

May 9 and 10 2011

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The University Advisory Board visited the University on the 9 and 10 May 2011. As with the previous report, this report is written in the spirit of providing input to the University by a panel of non-partisan independent observers. We provide feedback to enhance the performance of the University as would be expected of 'critical friends'.

We begin the report by making some general observations:

First and foremost, we were pleased that the views and input from the panel's report of last year were taken seriously and acted upon. It became clear during the discussions this year that much progress had been made within a relatively short period of time, especially about positioning Lund as an international university and the ongoing development of strategy.

There also seemed to have been a shift in making the Deans more involved in decision-making and strategy discussions. The EQ11 project had created a channel for dialogue and there were positive outcomes emerging from this. Of course the challenge is to ensure that this dialogue across the university is embedded and sustained.

Big Issues

We identified a number of 'big issues' during the course of our visit. These are elaborated below:

The Connected University

During the course of the EQ11 the idea of Lund as a '*Connected University*' emerged. This idea was in response to a less than positive view for the language of 'one university'. The 'connected university' was both a metaphor for how the university would present itself to the public but also as a strategic and operational idea.

As a '*Connected University*' it would operate on a number of levels. It would be connected to society through its research, education and community engagement. It would be a site for knowledge production and consumption and as a place where ideas could be robustly debated. It would be seen as a place of thought leadership through the dissemination of research and education.

It would be connected to students, present, past and future. Students are actively involved at Lund in decision-making, debate and discussion with management. Past students or alumni act as advocates for the University but also as a source for fund raising and positively profiling the achievements of graduates of Lund academic programs. Future students of course must be engaged with and these can be drawn from local, national or international sources.

Universities like Lund are large, complex and diverse. There are geographic and disciplinary differences that add to the richness of the university. At the same time this diversity can lead to silos so that the aspiration to promote interdisciplinarity is not achieved and faculties and departments become inward rather than outward looking. Faculties and Departments are connected through joint research and teaching programs, the organizations structures, policies and procedures allow for 'border crossing' to facilitate interdisciplinary research and teaching.

Universities are connected internationally through partnerships, collaborations and staff and student exchanges. Lund has a number of these in place which promote the profile of the University as well as enhancing the experience of students and staff.

Lund University has a long and distinguished history. Its values are rooted in the traditions generated over more than 300 years. These provide a sense of identity but also stability for the university and should be made public. They provide the foundation for its future as well. Accordingly Lund is connected to the past as well as the future.

The idea of the '*Connected University*' captured the imagination of many people during the course of the review and its public presentation of findings. One impediment was presented in that there was no Swedish word that captured the intent and possibility of the English words. Given that Lund is an international university, where English is widely spoken and is the language of instruction in a number of courses the question was asked *why a Swedish translation?*

Building a Common Mission

The Board noted the recent steady progress in developing a new strategic plan for the University. EQ11 is an important component of that work. As the University is at a significant point of opportunity in its long and distinguished history, board members felt there would be considerable merit in the University's members reflecting deeply about, and rearticulating, the mission of the University and its values. Both underpin the nature of the institution which, along with its history, helps to define its uniqueness and inform its ongoing development. In particular, values such as academic freedom, collegiality, subsidiarity, disciplinary diversity, connectedness, parity of esteem, and others should be carefully debated and defined in the Lund context.

Governance and Committees

The Board members were encouraged by the University's evolving thoughts about governance design. Because Lund has a unicameral governance structure,

board members felt there were good reasons to consider committees for Personnel, Planning and Resources, and General Purposes, in addition to the Education and Research Committees that are currently proposed. The inclusion of Personnel and Planning and Resources Committees would enable collegial deliberations about all four major strategic and policy strands of the University's activities. A General Purposes Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, would 'mop-up' the residual policy, strategic and operational matters that fall outside the four major committees' mandates. The design of terms of reference for the committees will require careful deliberation about the Governing Board's delegated authorities to each committee, in order that each Committee's work is purposeful and efficient while, at the same time, the Governing Board's fiduciary responsibilities are protected.

Administrative Changes

The Board was heartened to learn of the recent developments in the 'renewed administration' project. Board members reinforced the importance to administration design of recognizing the administration's primary purpose: to serve as effectively and efficiently the aspirations and activities of the academic staff and students. In that regard, they were encouraged by the work in progress to define core processes, to engineer them as simply as possible, and to structure the organization around them.

Organizational change projects are challenging in all organizations – universities are no exception. Such projects are necessary from time to time, as is currently the case at Lund. Based on its observations, the Board wished to reinforce the point that careful prioritizing and phasing of these projects is desirable to ensure successful realization at each stage. There will always be a limit to the amount of parallel activity an organization can implement and sustain at any time. As each phase is seen to have been completed and its benefits achieved, successive phases will become easier.

Administrative staff is an integral part of delivery of services across the university. These are valuable resources but sometimes go unacknowledged and unrewarded. We suggest that in order ensure the highest quality support professionalization of administrative staff needs to occur through professional development activities.

Administrative structures and processes do not exist in isolation they are an integral part of the broader university enterprise. Accordingly, there is a need to ensure that 'administration' exists to serve the aspirations of academics and students, not as an end in itself.

Balance between research and education

In a research intensive environment there will always be competition for limited resources. The tension between research and education is one of the most consistent areas in which this gets played out. However, these emergent tensions can be avoided if clear sets of principles for resource allocation are articulated and there is transparency in the budget process.

Transparency in processes and the balance between research and education can be achieved through the processes and procedures for resource allocation for start-up research and supporting new teaching initiatives (this could be the development of new programs or rethinking models of delivery, especially on-line delivery). Funds also need to be allocated to foster interdisciplinary research and teaching as is developed below.

Inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary initiatives

Lund University, by its complete set-up of academic disciplines, possesses an almost unlimited number of opportunities for new and visionary trans-disciplinary initiatives. This is a unique position in the Swedish academic landscape.

In a perfect world, trans-disciplinary efforts happen spontaneously and at the right time. However, realistically, to have a timely and viable launch of these efforts, kick-off seeding is needed. This is about seed funding from the University to trans-disciplinary constellations, where the partnering groups provide sound world-class academic reputations in their respective fields. Trans-disciplinary efforts built on weak academic fundamentals are risky, especially as the starting phase of trans-disciplinary programs is not always the most rewarding for academic achievements. The administration of this is a sensible mix of top-down and bottom-up leadership from the University. Internal funding for the first 3-5 years (“trial period”) might be realistic to have in order to achieve a nucleated trans-disciplinary program. The key element in this nucleation is the “free-moving” PhD-students, who can act over the classical borders. Therefore, the internal funding should be used for the financing of PhD’s. The evaluation of viable trans-disciplinary kick-off efforts should be based on achievements. The creation of a new unit at the University in the area comes in the second phase, when the efforts have shown its viability.

It is clear that the production and development of new knowledge is more likely to occur through crossing disciplinary boundaries. Likewise education and teaching that promotes this boundary crossing will bring about new understanding and knowledge. For this to occur it will be necessary to remove obstacles to interdisciplinary research/teaching. In some cases this will be a technical activity, getting rid of barriers such as resource flow or physical barriers. In other instances it may require cultural or individual change, getting people to see the value of this, and putting in place structures and processes that will facilitate it. We suggest that there is a need to keep the walls low and thus ensure an osmotic flow between departments and faculties.

Investments beyond buildings

There is no doubt that Lund University and its region will see a major expansion, both in terms of space and people, with the establishment of MAXIV and ESS. There will be a huge flux of top level scientists to the MAXIV and ESS and this can just be capitalized on if the University can match their expectations. With this in mind, considerable efforts will be needed in “human capital” if all the building and equipment investments should have expected impact on the region.

Even if this expansion from an administrative point of view is “external” to Lund University, the implications are many for the University if the actual synergies are to be achieved. The central issue is about allocating resources to create a “top-notch” bridgehead from the University to the MAXIV and ESS and all related spin-offs which are expected thereof.

The Lund Experience

During our last visit the panel proposed the idea of *The Lund Experience*. Through the experience of EQ11 there was evidence of this in place, even though it was not under the moniker of *The Lund Experience*. However, the Lund Experience can be characterized by the following.

Lund is:

- ✓ a student centered university;
- ✓ a place where students are involvement in governance and decision-making;
- ✓ a place where students have a voice and are listened to;
- ✓ a place where the focus is on learning;
- ✓ a university that promotes and offers interdisciplinary programs
- ✓ a university that promotes research linked and enhanced teaching
- ✓ a university where internationalization is reflected through:
 - Student learning opportunities
 - Diverse student body
 - Partnerships and collaborations that support research and student learning

EQ11

The week prior to the meeting of the UAB the panel involved in the EQ11 review visited the University. The review focused on development and improvement rather than audit. One of the most positive features of this project was it that provoked dialogue and discussion across the university about quality enhancement processes and initiatives. The review panel was positive in their determinations about quality enhancement at Lund. Feedback on interviews with members (teachers, students and administrative staff) indicated that not surprisingly there was diversity of views and practices.

Two points are worth highlighting. First, during the review it became clear that the focus of much attention was at the Faculty/Department level rather than the University. As a consequence there was evidence of a lack of long term strategic thinking; rather the emphasis was on tactical responses to immediate issues and challenges.

Second, there were numerous examples of excellence practice in teaching, student support, recognition of excellent teaching among others; these were not shared across the institution. Accordingly, there is a need to find ways to share best practice across university.

Fundraising

Planning activities for a new fundraising campaign for the University are developing well and the Advisory Board commends all who have been involved. Fundraising is an integral part of financing the aspirations of the academic staff and students of the University. Careful planning will be necessary to ensure

fundraising becomes embedded as a core activity and responsibility within the University. However, before any campaign is launched, collegial deliberations to agree the campaign priorities will be necessary. These should not be too numerous and must be clearly stated as well as consistent with the University's strategic priorities that will flow from its strategic plan, once completed

Further, as the University scales up for fundraising, Board members suggest it might consider the international norms as it designs its fundraising organization (i.e. in the medium term, the 'cost' of fundraising is 8-12 per cent of the amount raised annually). Board members noted that campaign fundraising will have implications for the work and responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor, the Deans, Heads of Department, and many senior academic staff members. Finally, one of *Development* or *Advancement* is the Board's preferred name for the department of the University responsible for the fundraising endeavour.

Closing Comments

The Panel was impressed by the progress made by the Management Team since our last visit. The challenge will be to sustain the effort and energy of all staff during a period of change and development.

While Lund has been improving its position in the international rankings, the panel is of the view that these rankings do not accurately represent the quality and excellence of the institution. While it would be unwise to disregard the rankings entirely, the panel did express the view that Lund should not be held captive to these rankings, especially in the development of new strategy.

In preparing for the next meeting we propose the following areas for discussion:

- What is needed to clear the next level in Lund's development for international excellence?
- Presentation of an organizational plan that accompanies the MAX IV and ESS development
- Progress on the *Connected University* concept
- Recruiting top class people
- How to structure the technology transfer interface (Chalmers, Karolinska very active)
- Impact of the new fee regime on income and diversity of student population
- Review outcomes of Fronesis project and their implementation

Again we thank the University for the opportunity to make a contribution to its future development. We have all enjoyed the experience.

31 May 2011