

## **Report on key observations by the Lund University Advisory Board November 1 and November 2 2010**

Provost Judyth Sachs,,Macquarie University, Sydney  
Doctor John Hood, Robertson Foundation, USA  
Professor Jan-Anders Månson, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne

The points made in this brief report are in response to the presentations given by members of the University Management Group (UMG), conversations during the two day visit and the materials the members of the Advisory Board were provided with prior to the visit.

Our observations are made in the spirit of feedback to enhance the performance of the University as would be expected of 'critical friends'.

First and foremost we were unanimous in our view that Lund is an impressive institution with great potential. With its strong leadership team, and its collegial approach this potential can be realized in the short term. However, our observations, which are presented in not specific order of importance, provide the opportunity for members of the University Management group to 'react' to observations made by outsiders.

In short there is a need to enhance the international profile and visibility of the University; this should be incorporated into the next generation strategy and plans.

Current Strategic Plans and other documents position Lund within the European context. We are of the view that in a globalized world where all universities are operating on a broad international stage there is a need to reframe the aspiration of the University- Lund is clearly world class - its research, the networks through which it is associated and its reputation position it on the world stage rather than European one.

Comprehensive universities like Lund balance science, technical and professional areas with humanities, social sciences and performing arts. Such a balanced

profile is crucial because the latter lie at the core of civil society. Moreover, the diversity of these areas provides opportunities for interdisciplinary research and teaching programs. However, when the external rewards and resources lie within the scientific domain it is easy to neglect the significance of the humanities and social sciences. The University would be ill advised to develop two classes of researchers and teachers, those who are successful in generating large amounts of income through grants and consultancies and those whose research and teaching is much less resource intensive. To this end we suggest a balanced approach to disciplinary development to ensure both a balance but also that the Humanities, Social Sciences and Performing Arts are integral to the university activities, profiles and priorities.

Because of the unique confluence of the opportunity provided by new scientific infrastructure, unprecedented levels of funding, and the legislative changes that will devolve from government to the University more responsibility for its own governance, we are strongly supportive of UMG's plan to undertake a comprehensive strategic planning exercise. We would encourage the UMG to be bold with its aspirations, with its strategies and with its subsequent operating objectives.

Operating in a highly competitive environment, nationally and internationally, demands differentiation, of research strengths and profile, but also of the types of academic programs offered to students at the undergraduate and post graduate level. To this end the question needs to be asked what characterizes the Lund degree and what experiences will enable students at Lund to differentiate themselves as graduates of high quality?

It is well known that S&T universities today explore opportunities for increased enrichment of both teaching and research by cross-disciplinary efforts, but are limited by in-house partnering possibilities. In comparison to this, Lund University possesses an almost complete palette of academic branches, giving great opportunities for both trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary efforts directed and supported within the same organization.

Devolution and greater autonomy bring with them greater responsibility for the affairs of the University and the related accountability for successful performance. Autonomy and academic freedom are intimately entwined. Above all, the UMG is responsible for protecting the academic freedom of the members of the University – staff and students. With the pending devolution changes, we believe it may be timely for the UMG to re-evaluate the governance

of the University. In that context, it might consider the merits or otherwise of introducing an academic board.

Within the new deregulated environment international students will be required to pay tuition fees. The recruitment of international students helps to diversify the student body, provides the opportunity to internationalize the curriculum by extending student learning experiences. Importantly it also brings in income. However, experience from Australia and elsewhere cautions us to ensure that entry standards for international students are not compromised and that the programs and countries from which students are drawn are diversified. Setting appropriate (high) admission standards and careful management of the mix of international students will ensure that Lund's reputation for high quality student learning outcomes is in no way compromised.

Any university is legitimized by its diverse communities of interest, be they local, national or international, government, firms, NGO's foundations, alumni, or other friends. Deliberate and coordinated engagement with each of them is highly desirable. We believe there may yet be institution-enhancing opportunities for the University with certain of these communities of interest.

One of today's major challenges for the universities is to attract both the best students and the best academic staff, which is highly inter-dependent. In many, or most, academic branches this competition is global and requires offers in conditions and salaries for academic staff recruitment which match up on the global scene. The development of the academic staff is to be balanced with a suitable mix of "Staring & Farming", highly reputed as well as young promising faculty members. The University may consider lobbying government to invest in supporting the recruitment of high quality researchers. The experience from Australia through the Federation Fellowship Scheme and the Canadian Research chairs recruited a new generation of researchers, renewed the ranks of the professoriate and enhanced productivity.

Many European countries are supporting policies that are resulting in progressive institutional devolution of responsibilities in the higher education sector. This is in some part because of recognition that centralization dulls institutional and individual creativity, and in some part because of government funding constraints and the resulting need for new funding sources to be developed by the institutions themselves. Sweden is at a relatively early stage in that process. All the pre-eminent universities of the world have large

endowments and sophisticated fund-raising organizations. Lund's plan to initiate a major fund-raising campaign to enhance its existing endowment is timely.

We believe a transparent and consistent resource allocation model that allocates funding all the way out to departments and institutes, with discretion for tax and transfer at university and faculty levels, would help to facilitate the establishment processes for inter-disciplinary centres. In a similar vein, regular University-sponsored seminars on big themes, with attendees from across the disciplinary spectrum, may also be beneficial, especially if some seed funding were to be available to support prototyping of the best resulting research and teaching ideas.

In conclusion we believe that this is an exciting moment in the University's evolution to achieve its aspirations and we look forward to our continuing visits to chart the University's progress.