

# *The future starts now!*

*A manifesto for a dialogue concerning  
Swedish higher education in 2030*

”  
*The society of the future  
demands diverse, competent, and  
independent institutions  
of higher education!*

*The Association of Swedish Higher Education (SUHF)  
was founded in 1995 as an organisation for  
institutional cooperation on a voluntary  
basis. 39 universities and university  
colleges in Sweden are  
members.*

## SUHF

The Association of  
Swedish Higher Education

## SUHF

The Association of  
Swedish Higher Education

***How can institutions of higher education best develop academic excellence and at the same time contribute responsibly to sustainable social development in Sweden and in the world? The Association of Swedish Higher Education (SUHF) desires, on the basis on this manifesto, to initiate a dialogue with decision makers and those who shape public opinion.***

## ***How will society manage the challenges of the future?***

There is no knowing how society will be shaped during the decades ahead, or what the biggest social challenges will be. The issues we struggle with today will probably be much the same tomorrow. Sooner or later, we are going to have to find answers to issues of globalisation, urbanisation, the future of the European community, democracy, divisions within and between countries, cultural integration, human rights, energy supplies, environmental threats, wars and famine, welfare challenges, growth and competitiveness, supplies of pure water, health, ageing populations and attitudinal differences between the generations.

The role of institutions of higher education is to problematize, formulate difficult questions and provide possible answers – sometimes to questions that have not yet been asked. The challenges of the future make the roles of education, research, innovation and collaboration ever more important.

Society should be open, inclusive and democratic. Defending and developing such a society requires profound, extensive knowledge that is continuously reviewed and developed through education and research of the very highest quality. Universities play indispensable roles in the building, maintaining and developing of society. Therefore, institutions of higher education must be independent, yet in close interplay with society and open to all.

Institutions of higher education offer a uniquely successful setting for the education and research society needs, both now and for the future. To ensure success in the long term, the higher education sector must be characterized by competence, dialogue and distinct profiles.

## ***Competence***

### ***– academic freedom and responsibility***

Taking responsibility, both individually and as a group, is fundamental and dynamic and this capacity will be more and more demanded of faculty, students, staff and partners in the community. This will involve the ability for individuals and groups to formulate their own questions and subject contemporary society to critical scrutiny.

The mission of higher education and research is complex and multi-faceted, and will remain so. Academic responsibility requires collegiate transparency and collaboration with others in validating new and established knowledge. This is a guarantee for the basic quality in all academic activities.

Taking this kind of responsibility requires sound academic leadership, leadership that can ensure that both organisation and working conditions allow individuals and institutions to flourish. Based on responsibility and academic freedom, universities will be strengthened as independent institutions and agents of social change.

## ***Dialogue***

### ***– the courage to challenge***

The future demands that education and research must not shy away from that which may be difficult or inconvenient. The existing, the obvious and the self-evident should be and must be challenged. Only in this way can new knowledge be created and new insights gained.

To challenge means to initiate and participate in dialogues within and between disciplines and with society. This means that researchers, lecturers and students must challenge not only themselves but also others, both in regard to their own results and to those of others, as well as the ways in which society uses their results. To challenge requires openness, security, confidence and courage. To challenge means being daring and being allowed to sometimes fail.

Through their specific competencies and through cross-disciplinary cooperation, academics in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, medicine, fine arts and technology should not only provoke and stimulate debate but also be active in setting the public agenda.



## ***Distinct profiles***

### ***– a key strength***

An ever more complex society increases the need for a wide diversity of education and research settings. Therefore, we need a higher education landscape that has diversity both in research and in our ways of organising and implementing teaching and learning, both in scope and in various geographical locations.

For each higher education institution, being different means assuming responsibility for its own future instead of being forced into a standard format of organization and areas of knowledge.

Each institution of higher education must be valued, assessed and funded on its own individual premise rather than to a given standard. The higher education system must therefore promote the diversity and independence of institutions.

***„...a uniquely successful setting...“***

***The existing, the obvious and the self-evident should be and must be challenged.***