

**Grundlag for rektor Henrik C. Wegeners tale ved
Immatrikulationen på Københavns Universitet, den 1.
september 2017**

DET TALTE ORD GÆLDER

Its a great pleasure to welcome some* 10.000
students to the University of Copenhagen
- including 2.000 international students.

I have a feeling of déjà-vu.

And indeed I have been here
before. Exactly 35 years ago,

I was a new student on this campus.

My hair was a bit longer – in fact it was present. And I did not wear this
outfit. But basically the university was about the same thing.

Always eager to offer you students a great
education, and always on the search for the
truth.

This endless search – you may call it re-
search is what we *all* have in common

– from the youngest student to the most experienced researcher.

You enter the university in a time

where the university has never been more important.

Today a lie travels with the speed of
Facebook, which means that fiction can
beat fact.

Just like in a storm where you see lightening before you hear the sound of
thunder. The task of a university is to turn up the sound of facts.

In a moment, I will introduce to you the university heads □ standing here in their ceremonial gowns.

It is customary for the students to cheer when I call out the dean of your faculty. But please also save a few cheers for the others – because we all work for the same great cause. From your left:

Prorector for Research and Innovation, Thomas

Bjørnholm Prorector for Education, Lykke Friis

Dean at the Faculty of Theology, Kirsten Busch

Nielsen Dean at the Faculty of Law, Jacob Graff
Nielsen

Dean at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Troels Østergaard

Sørensen Dean at the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences,

Ulla Wewer Dean at the Faculty of Humanities, Ulf Hedetoft

Dean at the Faculty of Science, John Renner

Hansen And University Director Jesper Olesen.

After the ceremony, the sweet deans will be serving sweet cake for you.

I have already talked about fake news.

But I have more news for you – good news and bad news.

Here's the bad news.

Last year, Professor Stephen Hawking said

we humans need to find a new planet to live on within the next 1000 years

– due to climate changes, epidemics and population growth.

This year, professor Hawking changed his forecast – we only have 100 years left.

You may disagree with Hawking on how many years we have left.
And you may say there are other ways to survive
than packing a suitcase and jumping on the nearest spaceship.

What about staying put and cleaning up the
mess we humans have been piling up on this
planet?

Yes - here comes the good news:

The university can get us out of trouble!

And by the university, I very much mean you – the embodiment of the
University.

Just consider all the big inventions
that made the world a better and safer place in the last
century. Most of them can be traced back to the
university:

Like antibiotics, genetics, laser or GPS.

And of course all the institutions of modern society that only work because
we are educated to understand them:

Like democracy and the rule of law.

I don't expect a quick fix to our troubled
planet. Because research is a looooong
process.

A colleague from Oxford said that they don't talk about a *good year or a bad
year*. At Oxford University, they discuss whether (or not) it was a good
century.

I sincerely hope you will make this century a good century.

You don't have to be a new Einstein to play a key role in the post-factual society.

All we need is people with intellects powerful enough to match the real super powers of your generation – Google and Facebook. The university will grant you this super power – the power to distinguish facts from fake news

And – as they say - with great powers comes great responsibility.

So I hope you will use your university education to “make this planet great again”!

- to use a slightly worn phrase.

But first you must become a student. What does it mean to be a

student? First of all, it means that you will swallow a lot of

knowledge.

But university education is more than that.

It also includes what can be called “dannelse” in Danish – “Bildung” in German. It means learning to learn.

A tool that can fix any problem – even the problems we have not yet seen. And it means the ability to form your own opinion

- rather than just trusting the news.
- or rather than trusting *everything* the Rector says in a speech.

Being a student also means breathing the atmosphere of research. Without the researchers, it would just be another school.

I will even encourage you to knock on their door to discuss an idea – they learn from you, as you learn from them.

Second, I will advise you to have a good time and get new friends.

You learn a lot from your fellow students, and no one is prepared to learn if one feels lonely.

Perhaps you can even show the international students what the Danish concept of "hygge" means.

The British newspaper The Guardian even presented the statistical evidence that "hygge" is actually a Danish thing:

Danes are - by far - Europe's biggest consumers of candle lights. We burn about 6 kilograms per person a year.

So please, Danish students; invite our new international friends for a "hyggelig" candle light dinner.

My third advice is that studying is not just about "hygge". It also demands hard work and determination.

Please be aware that Parliament has introduced a reform, which means that you should ideally finish your degree on time.

And please be aware that getting a great job is not just a random ad-on to a five-year degree.

As soon as you have survived the mental transfer to a university lifestyle, you should start thinking about what kind of job you would like

and how you can tweak your courses and projects to serve that end.

Dear students

I admit: This ceremony is very "old school".

- A horn section - with trumpets sounding like a scene from a black and white Robin Hood movie.
- And university managers dressed "Harry Potter-style".

You can feel that the university has been around for more than 500 years. And the tradition of "matriculation" certainly still makes sense.

It is custom that the new students give Rector a symbolic handshake.

The handshake means that the new students promise to respect the – rather barbaric - university laws from 1479.

Back then, bad students could be thrown in prison.

Don't worry – we don't use that kind of punishment anymore.

But today, I think we will shake hands on the value of university education based on:

- Research and the never-ending pursuit of deep knowledge and truth.
- The courage to foster your own opinion – based on research.
- And indeed, a desire to make this planet great again.

This is in short

the good news today, for our planet - and for your own life.

Please note that this ceremony normally takes place at the university main building at Frue Plads, which is right now undergoing renovation.

So instead of the stairway at Frue Plads, we have constructed a temporary one.

And from the main building, we have also taken the university eagle flying high on the banner and seeing far - just like the university. [Henrik peger op mod den].

Lykke Friis, our Pro-rector for education, will lend me a hand as we shake hands with all of you over there on "the Stairway to Wisdom" [Henrik peger].

It may be that you are the *online* generation. But today you will have to stand *in line*!

Please wait a moment as we listen to the university choir performing their evergreen "Holy Flame" [of knowledge].

Thank you!

*Error corrected in manuscript