

Speech at the KUBULUS Mentor Programme Kickoff, Thursday 19 January. By Pro-Vice-Chancellor Thomas Bjørnholm

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Dear Mentors and Mentees,
Welcome to the kickoff for the alumni association's mentor programme 2012!

Let me begin with a story about a classical mentor pair – that is Merlin and young Arthur, known from the story of the Sword in the Stone. Young Arthur is an orphan and lives with his foster father. But at age 12, he meets Merlin the wizard, who becomes his friend, tutor and protector.

Merlin knows that Arthur in time will prove to be England's true heir. Therefore, he prepares Arthur for a life as King by transforming him into different animals, so he can learn about the many different challenges life brings.

- As a squirrel, Arthur learns about gravity and about danger, when he is close to being eaten by a wolf.
- As a falcon, Arthur learns about courage and honour among the great knight falcons
- And as a goose, Arthur learns to fly and to look beyond physical boundaries and barriers on the ground

Merlin functions as Arthur's mentor by exposing him to unfamiliar situations that prepare him for his career as King. I guess you could call that a tailor-made coaching programme. In the University of Copenhagen's mentor programme, our mentees probably should not expect to be transformed to squirrels and geese – Even though we have mentors from both the Danish Society for Nature Conservation and from the Danish Outdoor Council.

And you cannot be sure that the mentor programme will lead to a career as ruler of the country with piles of gold, even though we have ministries and banks among the mentors. But what you can expect is a unique chance to learn more about how your skills can be used on the job market and get inspiration on some of the opportunities available to you.

And not least, help you sort out how you feel about a future career.

Because it may not be knight tournaments and royal dances that are on top of your career wish list.

And that is why a mentor programme with a wide range of companies and organizations is a great idea.

32 companies have joined us this year: Novo Nordisk and Netcompany COWI and the Climate Ministry ... and I could go on and on.

It goes without saying, that with so many different mentors and different mentees, you will experience very different mentoring processes.

Some will get a friend for life. And for others, the relation is strictly professional. Some will find inspiration for their dream job. And others might get clarification and turn in another direction. A philosopher can easily end up in Danske Bank. An English major may have a lot to offer Siemens. And for a geography student, a mentor from Tryg insurance may serve as a "career clarifier".

The outcome depends on both the mentor and the mentee.

But I wish to say to the mentees: "a responsibility rests on your shoulders".

You must help define your needs and set the agenda for your personal mentor programme.

At the turn of the year, a new strategy period began for the University of Copenhagen towards 2016. The new strategy sets a framework for how the University will strengthen its research and education over the next five years.

We have defined 3 focus areas, and one of them is:

"The University aims to strengthen its collaboration with the surrounding world, both in Denmark and abroad"

We are going to do that in several ways, and one of them is to continue our effort to secure the link between workplaces and our students.

Besides the mentor programme, KUBULUS works with:

- *Job-shadowing*, where students get an opportunity to visit a company for 1-2 days to experience how they could contribute in a work place.
- There is *company-dating*, where students and companies meet and rotate in 10 minutes intervals to test whether there is a mutual interest in future contact.
- And then there is *integrated project writing* in collaboration with companies

With this range of career activities, we hope to be able to bridge studies and work life – and help students put their career on the agenda in due time before the graduation party.

Therefore, I would like to thank the companies and organizations involved in this programme and all the mentors who participate. Your effort is very valuable to the students, and I am sure the programme will also prove valuable to you. Because the mentor programme is not just a possibility to help a student ease the transition into the job market in a time where the first job can be hard to find.

As a mentor, you also practice your coaching skills and your talent spotting. And you help develop a human being. Hopefully, that experience will prove helpful in a lot of other contexts. Your participation gives entire 170 graduate students the opportunity to get a mentor. Today is the big day where mentees get to meet mentors for the first time. Even though you don't end up like Arthur, it might lead to meetings around round tables and hopefully a lot of successful experiences that can easily measure up to pulling the sword from the stone.

So to the mentees – congratulations on your mentors!
And to the mentors – congratulations on your mentee