

Speech at the Crown Princess Mary Scholarship Award Ceremony. By Rector Ralf Hemmingsen, 19 June 2012.

Dear Stephanie, Dear Johanan, Your royal highness

Welcome to the University of Copenhagen and welcome to this year's Crown Princess Mary Scholarship award ceremony.

Travelling to other places can be fatal. At least if you ask Mark Twain who once said that "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness"! If this is true, you are well off. Stephanie and Johanan, you have both travelled quite a bit. And when going through both of your CV's it is obvious that you both possess a social commitment and outlook. No narrow-mindedness to be spotted here! And certainly no prejudice: You did your research, and your choice to go to Copenhagen was a well reflected one.

Stephanie, you have chosen to study at the School of Global Health because you found out that they have courses, which you do not have access to at the UWA. And your multidisciplinary focus matches well with the way we do things at this university. In fact it is part of our new strategy to enhance the level of cross disciplinarity in our courses.

I am sure that what you have learned here will also come to use, as you continue your very strong social engagement at the "Social Justice Collaboration". In a time where many people tend to be very much concerned with themselves, it is extremely encouraging to see students, who use their skills to help others.

Johanan, you have come from the University of Technology in Sydney to Copenhagen, because our Faculty of Law has a range of relevant courses to offer in the area of international law. The courses will not only strengthen your profile. They will also be of great use when carrying out your impressive UTS work, which takes you around the world. Browsing through your very interesting website, I could see that you have done India, Sri Lanka and Geneva in a very short time! You have both chosen to travel. And you have chosen to seek out a university where you could be challenged. I hope that the University of Copenhagen has succeeded in undertaking this task!

I also hope, that we have done well in receiving you in a way that have made you feel at home. At least almost at home. This is indeed one of our great challenges. It is often said, that it can be difficult for foreigners to get to know us Danes. But we are trying to improve the possibilities for our many international students: Every year we send out Danish students and receive international students through our exchange agreements with more than 50 countries. We have established career mentor programs especially for our international students.

Throughout the university there are quite a few activities for our international students such as international cafés, seminars and raising number of events in English – for example in our Ceremonial Hall, where we often receive international guest speakers. The Lord Mayor of Melbourne for instance!

We are also constantly raising the number of English programmes. Today we are offering more than 50 master and professional master programmes in English.

And then of course we are proud of our many student associations - you might have met the International Student Society of Copenhagen, the sports association or KUBULUS. And you might have attended some of our courses in Danish culture. Much more can be done – and it is part of our new strategy to become even more international. But I hope that you have benefitted from some of the opportunities which are already there.

And I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed your stay in Denmark – so far. I started out by quoting Mark Twain. I will also finish by quoting him. Apart from talking about the fatal travels, Mark Twain also said that: "Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth, all one's lifetime." You have certainly not vegetated in any corner. In that sense you both are an inspiration for our Danish students. And maybe also for our politicians who sometimes tend to believe that a university education is all about a narrow focus and following the fast-track lane to the job market. At any rate you are living proof, that it is possible to combine high academic standards with an international and social outlook.

Congratulations – and thank you for choosing the University of Copenhagen.