

**Welcome speech at Copenhagen Summer University, 13 August 2012. By Rector Ralf Hemmingsen.**

Welcome to the University of Copenhagen. And welcome to our Copenhagen Summer University, where “it only takes a week to get a couple of years wiser”.

We are pleased that you have chosen us among the many different continuing education options. Because it is indeed a large and diverse market. In New York City, for example, backrooms of bars and stages in clubs are turned into lecture halls. It’s part of a recent trend of alternative lecture series that combine Saturday night entertainment with learning.

Lectures and debates include everything from astrophysics to post-modern literature.

And the crowd listens and learns while drinking and dating. Whether it’s

- the Secret Science Club,
- the Nerd Nite or
- the Brooklyn Brainery,

the combination of beer and brains seems popular.

And the speakers – a few even Nobel Prize winners – are paid only in beer and applause.

If they are any good, they might earn a reputation such as “the Bruce Springsteen of science lecturers”. The trend is a fun and social example of continuing education.

Here, at the Copenhagen Summer University, we don’t serve beer

- at least not during the lectures. But hopefully, you will experience that you are both having fun and socializing while learning. Because that is the point of the courses.

And I believe the Summer University distinguishes itself from the vast continuing education market in several ways. During the next week, you will be presented with research-based expertise.

Some of the nation’s – and world’s – leading researchers work at the University’s six faculties.

And you will benefit from that, whether you have chosen to learn about

- Kierkegaard and coaching, biotech, China or the prevention of crime.

But you will also experience that the Professors don't hold all the answers and are not your only access to knowledge. Because with Copenhagen Summer University each of you are given a whole new network and as such access to the knowledge of that network.

To put it roughly: each class has 20 students. And with an average work experience of 10 years per student, there should be about 200 years of hands-on knowledge to learn from.

Hopefully, this gives you the right balance between theory and usability. And finally, you might experience the different approach to continued education in the way we go about learning. Because during the course, you will not just be introduced to concrete working tools ready for use in your daily work.

Rather, Summer University values the contemplation, depth and discussion that are characteristics of a university education. There is not just one truth or one right tool. Also, it is important that your week here does not become a one way experience. We hope you will contribute with your thoughts on the content as well as the concept.

Because we want the Summer University to meet your needs – both in terms of concrete knowledge for your daily work as well as new perspectives on that work. I hope the week ahead of you will be an experience to remember.

Finally, I wish to commend you and your organizations and companies on your decision to spend time and money on continuing education in a time of financial crisis. At the University of Copenhagen, we believe that research and education is the key to growth.

And as such, you have made a very sound investment. And should you get a chance to combine brain and beer the New York way, I am sure that will expand your horizons as well.

Enjoy!