

Aalto Day One 1.9.2026 puhe

Joona Lipponen, Aalto-yliopiston ylioppilaskunnan hallituksen puheenjohtaja, Chair of the Board of Aalto University Student Union AYY

On my first week on this campus, I remember asking my tutor if students wear overalls all the time. I didn't mean it as literally as it came out — I already knew you don't wear them to lectures. My tutor answered anyway, seriously, like the question deserved it.

Another time, I ran into trouble with a course enrollment — entirely my own doing, trying to maximise efficiency — and somehow ended up calling our school's Study Affairs Manager about it. In hindsight, probably not the first phone number a confused student should dial. But I hadn't thought that far, and it didn't seem to matter on the other end either.

And when I heard people in my guild having feelings on how our school treated different disciplines, I went straight to our dean and we set up a meeting. Same pattern: our concerns weren't waved off or explained away. They were actually looked into.

None of these people fixed anything about how the system is supposed to work. What they gave me, each time, was connection — attention that cost them something and that nothing required them to give.

I've come to think that's the actual mechanism here.

My generation currently doesn't trust the future the way generations before us did. Trust in the future doesn't come from things going right on schedule. In my view, it comes from connection, from stability, from belonging — the kind people build for each other, on purpose, one instance at a time.

My generation — we don't always ask for it gracefully. Young people are often eager before we're careful — I think we sometimes simply might lack the wisdom to go around the issue. Some go too straight to the point, and well, many don't say anything out loud. All of it can be addressed with the same feeling — connection.

When something like that doesn't resolve the way it's supposed to — a job that doesn't materialize, support that gets cut right when it's needed — in times like this, it's easy to lose trust that the future holds much. That trust doesn't come back because someone tells you it's fine. It comes back the way it did in that phone call, in that meeting: through connection, belonging, or help deliberately given.

Me teemme täällä Aallossa monta asiaa oikein. Ylioppilaskuntamme visiona on ollut rakentaa maailman parasta opiskelijan elämää — ja viisi vuotta tätä paikkaa läheltä

seurattuani en usko, että olemme siitä kaukana. Startup-ekosysteemimme on maailmanluokkaa, ja samoin on jotain, minkä sisältäpäin on helppo pitää itsestään selvyytenä: se, että kauppatiede, tekniikka ja taide todella jakavat saman kampuksen, on maailmanlaajuisestikin uniikkia — juuri siitä oli kyse mainitsemassani tapaamisessa dekaanimme kanssa: tieteenaloja kunnioitetaan rinnakkain — ilman piilossa olevia ennakkoluuloja, tilastoja siitä miksi jokin olisi toista merkityksellisempi, tai toisten kustannuksella heitettyjä vitsejä.

Aalto on nuorempi kuin moni meistä täällä arjessa tulee ajatelleeksi — perustettu vuonna 2010, kun kolme koulua yhdistyi yhdeksi, hyvin tietoisiksi vedoksi siitä, mihin nuoret ihmiset pystyvät. Viisitoista vuotta myöhemmin: yli 17 000 valmistunutta, ja noin 70–100 uutta yritystä syntyy täältä joka ikinen vuosi. Mikään tästä ei tapahtunut siksi, että joku lupasi paremman ajan koittavan. Se tapahtui, koska ihmiset — moni heistä istuu tänään tässä salissa — rakensivat vielä yhden ohjelman, avasivat vielä yhden oven, jollekulle joka ei ollut vielä saapunut.

Here's what I think is easy to miss from the inside: none of what I just described — the tutor, the phone call, the dean's meeting, fifteen years of programs and open doors — required anyone to be a visionary. That's the leverage: the highest-return thing in this entire community might be the two minutes spent on a question that seemed too small to matter.

None of this asks us to sand down what makes each corner of this community distinct. You can be a proud kylteri, teekkari, arts student, a researcher, a staff member — you name it — and hold onto everything particular about that identity, while still keeping together with the wider Aalto community. It's only together, with connection and without unneeded boundaries between us, that we can drive for even more excellence than any one of us could reach alone.

Being bold enough to build something new for the people who come after us doesn't mean starting over. Not radical creativity for its own sake but the same kind of deliberate, unglamorous effort that got us here.

Whatever is distinct about the students starting today will only go anywhere if there's enough trust in the future underneath it to move. That's what this community has quietly built all these years throughout its history. Not certainty. Just enough connection to make moving forward feel worth it.

Let's not forget what creates our uniqueness, the same uniqueness that makes us special, creates our story and allows us to change the world. One academic year at a time and for futures to come.