

Dear friends of learning,

I can actually think of no higher title to call you.

Being a friend of learning means being a champion of positive change, always moving forward, looking for solutions and believing in a fact based world. Desiring to learn gives you an optimistic yet realistic world view, it puts you in the camp of tolerance towards other people, as learning breeds understanding which reduces the distractions of skin color, religion or sex.

For those and many other reasons I am proud to address you as friends of learning. Many of the biggest friends of learning often take on the duty to teach others. In my opinion there is no nobler profession than that of a teacher. And, in the end we are all teachers in some way, even if not all of us fully embrace that opportunity.

On behalf of my fellow honorary doctorate elects, I would like to thank the leadership and faculty of Aalto University not just for the honor you are bestowing on us today but for your dedication to promote research and learning in our world. I am an alumni of Aalto and proud of that. The Aalto alumni is a forming community but is already showing signs of greatness. One can leave the Aalto University but Aalto will never leave you.

When I was a young entrepreneur, Finland was mostly known for its forests and definitely not for its technology prowess. In our corporate brochures I always listed our office in Silicon Valley at the top trying to fake being a Valley based company and hide our humble origins in Finland. As Nokia lifted Finland to the world map, being Finnish became a source of pride for my company. Nowadays, it is a competitive advantage.

Being associated with Aalto is already a source of pride to many. Through smart work we can make it into an independent source of competitiveness for members of our alumni!

One of my favorite sayings is: Some men see things as they are and ask why. Others dream things that never were and ask why not. - George Bernard Shaw
Those of us that see things as they are and ask why are pure scientists. They want to understand how the world works. Those that dream things that never were, and ask why not, are the entrepreneurs. In Aalto we are raising people that ask both why and why not. People who seek understanding and act based on that. That is, in essence, what makes Aalto special.

My dear friends of learning, let me finish where I started, with the topic of learning. Learning is not only a pleasure and a privilege, it is also an obligation. Especially those of us in leadership roles often fall into the trap of delegating learning to our teams. We think we are too busy and too important to really go back to school and truly learn something meaningful. Leadership roles bring an accountability to be both a role model and make sure that our own competence is up to the challenges we have accepted.

Like Einstein said: Wisdom is not a product of schooling, but of the lifetime attempt to acquire it.

Thank you all for what you are doing!