

Dear Aalto community members,

More than a decade ago, in 2007, I worked as a Professor of Computer Science at the Helsinki University of Technology.

I was a typical professor: absorbed in my research, writing papers, planning new projects, and busy with teaching.

Around that time, I started receiving news about this idea of merging three universities in the capital region – Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki School of Economics, and the University of Art and Design Helsinki. The idea was promoted by the university rectors and there was a broad discussion around it. However, I must confess I was a bit hesitant as I didn't see how this kind of a merger could bring my own field forward.

During the preparations of the merger, there were very bold plans made, with extremely ambitious targets like achieving “world-class within ten years”. To me, that kind of a goal seemed vague and unrealistic. Focusing on my own research was much more relevant for me at that time.

In the autumn of 2010, as the first full academic year of Aalto was starting, I found myself reconsidering the significance of this new university for myself and for my field.

As I became more familiar with Aalto's plans, I began to realize the potential and uniqueness of the new university. I started to understand that if I really wanted to push my own field forward, it was actually great to be somewhere with an ambitious, future-oriented long-term vision.

Ten years have passed.

It is incredible, what we have achieved. Our success lies not just in the excellence and increasing impact of our chosen key areas in research, art, and

education. We have also found ways to collaborate across fields, boost innovations, and we've created a unique world-class collaboration hub at our Otaniemi campus. Aalto is ranked amongst the best young universities in the world. I couldn't be more proud of what the Aalto community has achieved thus far.

I feel that without the bold plans for the new university and the resulting first strategy, we would not be here now. The long-term strategy gave us a joint direction, shared values and demanding goals to reach.

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Today, as we celebrate Aalto's first ten years, we are at a turning point yet again.

We see major trends that shape the world, our university, and ourselves. The global sustainability crisis calls for immediate actions. Technological disruptions affect businesses, working life, and societies. The economic centre of gravity is shifting towards Asia. The landscape of higher education is changing in a major way in terms of demand, competition, digitalization and funding.

Now, we must be as brave as we were ten years ago. We can tackle these challenges and turn them into new opportunities and successes. But in order to do that we have to work together. We must have shared values and a joint direction and strategy. We need to make the best use of the individual strengths that each one of you here, today, has. We also need to connect our strengths to tackle the grand challenges.

Throughout last year, you were all invited to share your unique insights and take part in discussions about our direction, and many of you did! With all my heart, I want to thank you for this valuable contribution.

To face the challenges of tomorrow, we have renewed the purpose for our university and redefined the shared values of our community.

Our purpose is to shape a sustainable future.

For us as a university this means long-term commitment in driving research excellence and making breakthroughs, in educating the game changers of tomorrow and in renewing society with research-based knowledge, creativity and an entrepreneurial mindset.

For this endeavor, we are guided by our three values:

- courage – we are agile, creative and passionate, and aim high;
- responsibility – we work for a better world and act sustainably for the wellbeing of all; and
- collaboration – we foster a diverse community that shines by working together.

These are our shared values we have decided upon together.

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Our purpose and shared values provide the long term direction for our work. Based on this we have selected some particular areas as the focus of development. In the rapidly changing world, we will continuously re-evaluate these choices as a community.

In research, we put increasing effort in creating world-class clusters of excellence in our key research areas, but also in bringing complementary talent together to work on grand challenges.

In education, we will take greater societal responsibility in both degree education as well as in continuous learning. We want offer our students outstanding quality and inspiring learning experience.

Our impact as a university comes through the networks that we build as a community of faculty, staff, students, alumni and partners. We want to create an innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial ecosystem that stands out globally, and that makes Aalto the place to be, worldwide.

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In addition to the development actions in research, education, and impact, we have selected three cross-cutting approaches based on the special strengths of the Aalto community that are embedded in all of our actions:

- Firstly, we look for solutions for sustainability. For us it is not enough to act sustainably ourselves, but if we connect our strengths, we have the capabilities to create solutions for the grand challenges
- Secondly, we aim at radical creativity. We create spaces and practices that encourage us all to break boundaries and look for novel perspectives.
- Thirdly, we advance an entrepreneurial mindset throughout the community

These approaches are very characteristic for Aalto but I believe that it is this combination that makes us stand out globally and that is very powerful in driving our purpose: solutions for a sustainable future through radical creativity and an entrepreneurial way of working.

Now, you might be wondering, how do we succeed in all of this? The university in itself does not achieve anything.

It's the people, the community that does. So the key to success are investments in our people and community to develop a culture of inclusion, curiosity, collaboration, and wellbeing. But we also need an inspiring setting for our work though investments in our infrastructures, campus and service solutions.

For me personally, Aalto's ten years have been a transformative experience. Maybe I haven't been able to make so many deep dives into my scientific work as a professor, but something has happened in me: my Aalto journey has planted a seed of determined optimism.

Based on the development in the last 10 years, I'm convinced that Aalto can play a vital role in leading change in the world.

I am convinced, that we as the Aalto community can respond to the needs of the society: by boldly choosing a common direction and strategy and by taking small steps systematically, together.

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Dear friends,

The world needs universities more than ever. For new discoveries, for research-based knowledge and critical thinking, for supporting learning and personal growth throughout the life, and for joining forces to tackle societal grand challenges.

We are all called to action – to shape a sustainable future.