

Distinguished Prime Minister, president of the university, guests of honour, professors, and the rest of the academic community – dear students!

Aalto University has five years behind it now. Those five years have not always been easy, but they have been interesting and an awakening for the Finnish universities. The years were not made easier by financing promises fallen short, and especially not by the Finnish Government's continued desire to cut from our nation's future, education and research. The situation is not, however, necessarily as bad as it seems. The government's actions are forcing universities to consider their core operations and to make tough choices. Universities are being forced to focus instead of continuing with the expansion of past years. Hopefully, these actions will allow us to improve the quality of education programmes across Finland.

As Tuula said, Aalto has gone through a massive undertaking to take us in the right direction. The university application process for profiling-based funding, which benefited Aalto the most, is an indication of this. This will force universities to reconsider their operations so that their graduates will end up as international leaders in their fields. That is the direction our nation should aim towards in university funding. We students also think about possible solutions and how to make sure we get the best learning experience in the current situation, how to keep learning social skills in our community, and how we, members of the Aalto community, can have the best skills for changing the world.

Interdisciplinary studies are becoming more and more possible at Aalto each year with the provision of minor subject modules and courses in which we ensure that different fields get to meet. Interdisciplinarity is also visible in our community. For example, the Teknologföreningen, Aalto's Swedish-language student nation, has members from all of our old universities. TOKYO counts several active architects as its members. Not to forget Aaltoes, who have managed to gain interested members across university borders.

It is, however, worth remembering, that being interdisciplinary doesn't mean being an expert at everything, but having an understanding of several fields. I'm not good at Swedish but it's important to be excellent at what you want to do – what you enjoy!

Our Aalto community is going through a very interesting time right now. Otaniemi is being improved at full throttle: buildings are being renovated and new ones are just starting construction. Student housing takes on an interesting position, as it is definitely scarce in Otaniemi. Once again this autumn we will have several thousands of students in line for housing, some of them spending their nights on a friend's floor and some in cheap hotels. The decision on the Otaniemi campus was made a few years ago, which means the amount of active students in Otaniemi is going to grow by thousands. This growth requires a response from us. The student union has initiated several projects that could help with the housing shortage. Making them happen, however, will require aid both from the university, the city and the Finnish Government!

In addition to student housing, there have been rumblings of a new, interesting project in Otaniemi: a common meeting place for students, a common student building. The project shows the students' desire to focus on improving our campus area, our Aalto. And while that project is only just beginning, it has massive potential for providing many opportunities. Most importantly, the time is right.

In addition to the student union, the university itself is preparing for new construction. The construction of the new ARTS main building, Väre, begins. Once completed, it will be a magnificent building that, above all, makes the common Aalto campus a reality for all our students. There is still plenty of time until its completion and the Arabia facilities move here, but this year, we will be welcoming our first large influx in Otaniemi.

And that will happen today, almost right now, when the bachelor students of economics and business administration transfer over to Otaniemi. And they're coming in force. This is one of the greatest steps in Aalto history that will enable the birth of a truly interdisciplinary community and the studies that entails. The business students are certain to enliven the campus in many ways. Once Aalto's common campus is complete, students from different fields will have an easier time of exchanging ideas, and the creation of new ideas and innovations will be possible. Today is the day that will be remembered in Aalto's history – the day the business students arrived in Otaniemi.

The coming years will certainly present us with different challenges, and the opportunities within are for us to find. Through them, we, the Aalto community, can change Finland and the world.

On behalf of the Aalto University Student Union, I want to wish you all an excellent new academic year and good luck in the coming changes!