

Göran Bergkvist - letter of intent

I am a plant and soil agronomist educated at SLU and I have also worked at SLU for most of my professional career. Since my doctoral studies, my work has focused on the development of knowledge that is central to sustainable cropping systems. Through research and teaching in close collaboration with the agricultural sector, I have developed a strong understanding of the demands and expectations that society, industry and other stakeholders place on SLU.

Over the years, I have followed and, in various roles, been part of the positive development towards increased scientific excellence within many of the university's activities. For me, it is essential that this excellence is also translated into clear impact beyond academia, so that SLU can contribute in a relevant and credible way to addressing the major societal challenges that are so evident within our sectors. It is in the interaction between scientific strength and societal benefit that SLU's distinct position and long-term legitimacy are shaped.

My assignments at SLU have largely been cross-faculty in nature, which has given me a good understanding of the different conditions, strengths and challenges of the faculties. At the same time, this has highlighted the considerable potential of deeper collaboration across faculties. I see the development of strong cross-faculty environments as central to SLU's continued development, not least because future research and societal challenges rarely follow faculty boundaries, and because increased methodological collaboration can strengthen both quality and efficiency.

After many years of work in the leadership of the Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, as a member of the Faculty Board and as Vice-Dean, I have developed a clear view of what SLU can and should achieve. I now wish to contribute at the level where overarching strategic decisions for the entire university are made. Against this background, I believe that I am well positioned to contribute to the work of the University Board, as I work closely with leading researchers across several disciplines, have established contacts with stakeholders outside SLU, have a strong understanding of the educational mission, and a deep commitment to the university's development.

The issues I particularly wish to pursue as a member of the Board concern, first, how SLU can strengthen its scientific position within its profile areas and, based on these strengths, increase the attractiveness of its education programmes and its impact on society. A key component of this is the long-term strategic use of resources to create conditions for new strong research and teaching environments. In this context, I see well-funded positions for assistant professors, as well as clear alternative academic career paths, as central tools for attracting international excellence, inspire promising scientists at SLU and for developing the next generation of research leaders.

Second, I wish to contribute to SLU taking a clearer leadership role in major national and international research initiatives. This requires both mentorship and structures that provide researchers with the mandate to lead complex consortia, as well as an active role for the university leadership and the Board in initiating and supporting strategic initiatives.

Finally, I wish to work towards ensuring that the ambition of "One SLU" is more fully realised in practice. The Board has an important role in creating more equivalent administrative conditions across faculties to reduce inefficiencies and frustration, while at the same time safeguarding and making use of the faculties' distinct profiles and strengths. This is crucial if SLU is to fully meet future cross-disciplinary challenges in a coordinated and effective manner.