

## Letter of intent Göran Spong

Decisions made by the board have a profound influence on SLU's well-being, even when they feel distant from our everyday academic work. Internally elected members of the board are critical contact points of the organization, providing direct insight into our primary missions of teaching, research and environmental monitoring. Here, elected bodies at the university embody long-standing collegial traditions that have shaped universities since their inception. These structures help safeguard academic freedom and provide a counterbalance to overly political or hierarchical management models. When department boards were abolished in 2007 and a more linear management structure was introduced, decision-making became more streamlined and accountable to fewer actors. While this model offers certain efficiencies, it also carries risks, particularly in terms of transparency, inclusiveness, and anchoring decisions in the academic core of the university.

As a previous and potential future board member, I thus see my primary responsibility as representing the collective thoughts of staff and students. The role also includes serving as a sentinel for decision-making processes that are transparent, objective, fair, and firmly grounded in facts and broad input. These principles are fundamental to sound governance and take precedence over individual opinions or short-term considerations. Ultimately, actions matter more than statements of intent.

Board decisions should be guided by what best serves the university as a whole, with a clear focus on long-term academic integrity, societal responsibility, and operational sustainability. At the same time, such decisions must recognize and protect the university's most important resource: its staff and students. Teaching, research, and environmental monitoring are inseparable from the people who carry them out. Institutional strength depends on good working conditions, a supportive environment, and mutual trust. Aligning institutional goals with the needs of those who sustain them are not competing priorities, but synergistic. Based on my previous terms on the board and extensive experience in international research and academic work, I will endeavor to contribute additional perspectives and points of reference to the role outlined above.