

Aktum.

FOR EVERYONE WORKING AT UMEÅ UNIVERSITY • MAY 2019 • NO 1

Meet Felipe Cava

*Seeking
new insights
about
microbes*

Plan S

Researchers sceptical
of tight time plan

Aula Biologica

A multi-purpose
auditorium

THEME Basic values

47 dilemmas to train
employees' skills

A day at work

Learning theory
through practice



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

Firstly...

Working to build common basic values – boosting discussions

What are common basic values? Is that really something we need to discuss? Is it not obvious?

No, clearly not. There are probably people all over the place in society who have not even considered what basic values suggest. Our values can be so different. They could be religious, cultural or personal. Traditions and ingrained routines. Sometimes, it is a matter of chemistry between people.

We often take for granted that ‘everyone’ can separate right from wrong at a workplace.

But when you start discussing specific cases, it is obvious that things are not as obvious as we first thought.

The project team for the state sector’s common basic values at the University did just this: they started discussing. They put together a few dilemmas in which it is not easy to give a clear answer to the recommended response to a certain situation. There so much left to discuss.

Participants from the Faculty Office of Medicine also took part in discussions and realised that basic values is something you need to practise. The practice they performed worked as a type of choke (and everyone who is familiar with old cars know what I’m talking about), giving a little extra fuel to thoughts and questions that emerged.

So are we different because we work at a university? Are the demands on us set higher? Well, maybe. The Common basic values for central government employees cover Umeå University too. We are expected to know and adhere to laws and regulations, be aware of rights and obligations, we must be clear and transparent in our communication both internally and externally, and we need to be open about our methods of working. Our personal opinions may not affect our decision-making.



That is why working with our common basic values will probably help us pay attention to what is going on, at least in our immediate vicinity. It may even give us a little extra fuel to have the energy needed to start a discussion when we experience or notice how someone is being treated unjustly.

So take the chance for reflection! ●

INGER NILSSON
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“We often take for granted that ‘everyone’ can separate right from wrong.”

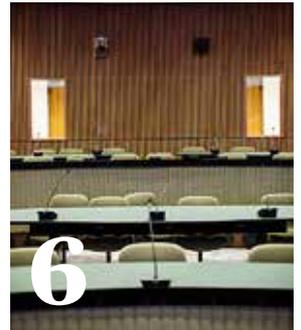
Contents



THEME *Basic values*

8 Practice makes perfect – also with basic values. It is an ongoing and continuous work.

- 3 A new vision comes along**
The new vision is the result of at least 20 versions of one text
- 4 Outlook**
Plan S, Open Access proposal raises concerns
- 5 Signed**
Heidi Hansson: Discussing our common basic values helps us to develop our empathy and teaches us to change our perspectives
- 6 Aula Biologica**
A unique room for teaching and learning
- 7 From the archives**
In the 70s, a lunch cost SEK 6.90 at “Snabben”
- 7 Ulrika Söderlind**
Cookbook author goes to Paris
- 14 Profile**
Wants to better understand microbes
- 17 A day at the Police Education**
A propitious combination of theory and practice
- 24 Finally**
Anna Baranowska-Rataj about an inspiring exchange of ideas



Aktum.

Publisher Gunilla Stendahl, Head of the Communications Office
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Translation Anna Lawrence, David Meyers
Cover photo Mattias Pettersson **Design and repro** Inhousebyrån, Umeå University
Printing Taberg Media Group
Any questions about distribution? Please contact Cecilia Nilsson, +46 90 786 66 77.

aurora.umu.se/aktum

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On the intranet Aurora, you will find the latest news for people working at Umeå University.



An active document

At the beginning of April, the University Board approved the new vision for Umeå University. Since the first draft was published, many versions, comments and discussions have gone back and forth.

ÅSA RUDEHÅLL, analyst at the Planning Office, is responsible for coordinating the Swedish text revisions.

This is not the first time you have participated in drafting a vision for Umeå University, is it?

“No. I participated in writing the development programme for the Vision and strategies that was approved by the Board in 2003. Inge-Bert Täljedal was the Vice-Chancellor back then.”

What is the main difference between this vision document and the previous ones?

“All our vision documents have been different in both scope and setup. This one is different in the way that it only consists of a vision, but no objectives and strategies. Another difference is that this vision is not structured in separate chapters for research, education and collaboration. The University Management made it clear from the onset that such a division wasn't what they wanted.”

What role have you had this time?

“My job has been to listen to ideas, views and suggestions and put them into words. The vision that has now been approved by the University Board is the result of at least 20 versions that have been tested on various groups. The biggest influence were all the views that came through the internal consultation.”

What had been done when you started writing?

“We started by reading all the answers to the six questions the Vice-Chancellor had submitted for consultation within the organisation in early autumn 2018. Based on the answers, the University Management had some initial discussions that led to the very first draft.

Basically every wording has been revised since then, but one thing that has outlived all the revisions are the three headlines that the vision is based upon: Umeå University in the future, Joint development of knowledge, and Competitiveness and pride.”

What was discussed most during the process?

“Some had opinions and wanted to delete the text about the Umeå University spirit that is described in the introduction. Our position in the Arctic was also more prominent in the first version, but it was criticised and thus toned down in later versions.

The consultation contained views that the vision was not edgy enough and does not provide a clear enough direction. We tried to improve that in the last version prior to approval by the University Board.”

What lessons have you learnt during all this?

“To trust the process.”

JONAS LIDSTRÖM



PHOTO: ULRIKA BERGFORS

360,189

That was the number of applications to university courses and programmes this autumn when the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet) closed the admissions round on antagning.se. After having decreased for years, the number of applicants is now steady at the same level as last spring. The largest number of applications to Umeå University were made to the Medical Programme (3,982) and to the Master's Programme in Law (2,868).

Increase in admissions to Master's programmes this autumn

For autumn 2019, the number of admitted students to Master's programmes at Umeå University is 892, which is 20 more (or 2% more) than last year. The biggest increase — a full 65 per cent — took place at Jönköping University with their 263 admitted students. Lund University admits the largest number — 4,294 Master's students.

Criticism towards Plan S

Last year, a consortium of research funding bodies from twelve European countries launched the Plan S initiative. The idea is that all publicly funded publications should be openly accessible to anyone interested.

TEXT: Camilla Bergvall PHOTO: Simon Jönsson

MANY researchers are openly critical towards the proposal, which is intended to cover projects that are granted funds from 2020 and onwards.

“I agree that research should be accessible, and the idea of open access is good, but the time plan is too short and the plan risks to put early career researchers in a tricky position,” says Dieter Müller, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Umeå University.

There is no consensus among the major Swedish research funding bodies. Formas and Forte support the proposal, whereas the Swedish Research Council and the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences do not. Many European researchers are frustrated. Almost 2,000 of them, several Umeå researchers included, have signed an open petition against the plan. Their concerns regard the predominant rules for acquisition of qualifications, where publications in prestigious journals are highly ranked.

“Plan S, in its current state, hinders researchers to publish their findings in many well-established scientific journals. Researchers who after 2020 receive funding from a research funding body that has signed onto the plan must then choose purely open access journals or journals that allow simultaneous publications in open archives,” says Mats Almqvist, head of section at the University Library.

OTHER USUAL QUESTIONS that researchers highlight are: What happens if the rest of the world – particularly Asia and North



Mats Almqvist, head of section at the Umeå University Library, who took part in compiling Umeå University's views on how to implement Plan S.

America – do not join? How are international collaborations and the recruitment of international postdoctoral fellowships affected?

“The proposal has been developed without gaining the support from the research community, which is counterproductive,” says Mats Almqvist, who estimates that a majority of Swedish researchers are against the current proposal.

He also thinks that some researchers are already worried about making mistakes: When does the plan come into effect? What happens if I fail to follow the rules – do I have to pay back my funding?

“The implementation of the plan still raises a fair few questions, and the proposal

is likely to be amended. When that's been done, the details will become more clear,” says Mats Almqvist.

CURRENTLY, THE LIBRARY has a few agreements with publishers that completely or partly fulfil the requirements of Plan S, among them is Frontiers, and more agreements on open access with journals are on the way.

“You're welcome to contact the publication and research support team at the University Library if you have any questions about specific journals,” says Mats Almqvist.

The perfect workplace

ALL OF US MOST likely have a conception about the perfect workplace. It is often associated with an environment of creativity, harmony and togetherness. But how creative is an organisation that is characterised by total unanimity? Consensus is not necessarily equal to progression and the absence of conflicts may arouse certain suspicion. If everyone agrees, have we then lapsed into a group-think mentality where there is no space for diverging ideas? Is the absence of contradictions in fact a symptom of domination? Should we suspect echoes of George Orwell who wrote “all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”? These questions are extremely important in the development of a common set of values at Umeå University. We need to learn to provide shelter for conflicts and opposing viewpoints without camouflaging their differences.

WE ARE OFTEN faced with questions where the answer is not obvious. In science, we talk about ‘wicked problems’. In everyday life, we rather wrestle with di-



PHOTO: MATTIAS PETERSSON

lemmas. In both cases, there are no simple solutions and it can be difficult to formulate the question. It is complicated or impossible to isolate the problem from all other aspects that influence the situation. The information is inconclusive and contradictory. It is not possible to tell right from wrong, but simply what is better or worse – and often what is a better outcome for one side to the detriment of the other. Since most of us are solution-oriented, a dilemma is a frustrating challenge. How can we learn to accept that some problems do not have a perfect answer?

EACH DILEMMA IS unique and cannot be reduced to a black and white conflict. It is tempting to simply suggest Solomonic methods that basically eliminate the problem, but the important thing is that working on common basic values help us to develop our empathy and teaches us to change our perspective. In the Swedish culture of consensus and perhaps especially in the higher education sector, we generally observe a debate of opinions as a battle for someone to win. Ultimately, this leads to problem-solving models that are authoritative or somewhat competitive. In some other cultures, one considers the debate as a dance in which participants follow different turns, but everyone’s dance steps are needed for a good end result. The model of thinking can help us change our approach from trying to eliminate problems to welcoming differences which provides us with new insights. ●

HEIDI HANSSON
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR

Figuratively speaking Erik Domellöf

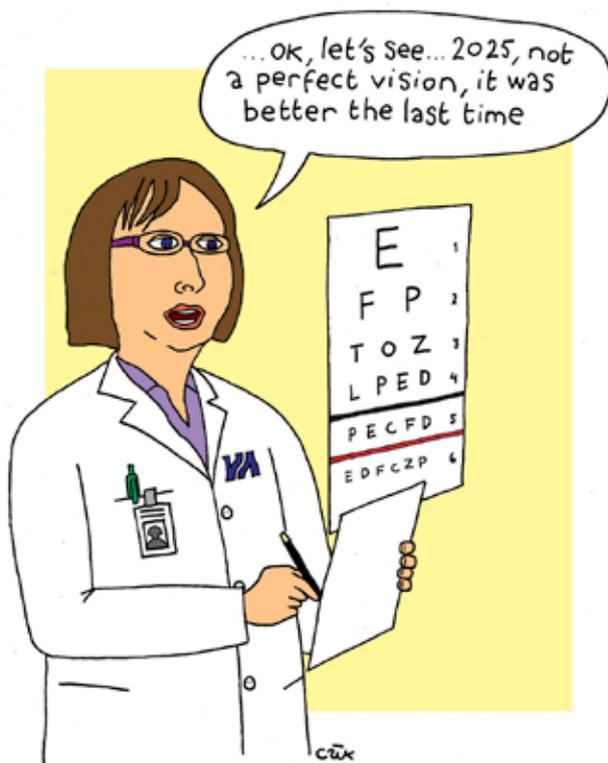


PHOTO: MATTIAS PETERSSON

Matilda Ernkrans returns to Umeå on 12 June.

Returning minister

On 21 March, Matilda Ernkrans, the new Minister for Higher Education and Research made a short stop at Umeå University. On 12 June she returns on a skills provision tour. For Umeå, the health sciences programmes are in focus. The other universities Matilda Ernkrans is planning to visit are Malmö (focus: teacher education) and Chalmers (focus: industry and business).

The idea is that the minister will meet the Vice-Chancellor and representatives of the University but also representatives from the region, municipality and general public.

Aula Biologica — a unique room for teaching and learning. May also require a new approach to teaching.



Auditorium with great potential

Adjacent to the oldest building at the University is the newest. Aula Biologica has a capacity of 155 people and is abundant with technical solutions.

TEXT: Per Melander **PHOTO:** Simon Jönsson

AULA BIOLOGICA fills various needs explains Johanna Westberg, estate planner at the Building Office. On the one hand, the Biology Building – the University’s oldest building – needed a renovation. On the other hand, the Medical Programme was in need of a larger lecture hall. In planning for the renovations, they realised that there was no room in the existing buildings, so the best option was to build a new one.

“With regards to the feeling and atmosphere that we have been striving for, there’s already existing rooms, such as Vardagsrummet in the Humanities Building and other new learning environments to use as templates,” says Johanna Westberg. “Also, the work and studies carried out at the Centre for Educational Development (UPL) and the Department of Applied Educational Science have formed the basis for the requirements. In addition, the architect has also travelled around a bit in search for inspiration.” She continues:



Per-Arne Oldenberg sees new opportunities with Aula Biologica, not least for distance education.

“I think the result exceeds expectations. I have followed the development of these drawings for five years now, and the result is so much better than I could ever have imagined. Not least how the new technology works and is integrated in the room.”

PER-ARNE OLDENBERG, Professor and Head of the Department of Integrative Medical Biology, appreciates the new auditorium

and has already found time to use Aula Biologica in his teaching.

“This hall is like no other on campus – it took me ten minutes to figure out how to turn on the projectors,” says Per-Arne Oldenberg.

He emphasises that it is important to get accustomed with the technical equipment and he is calling for some form of collective training that ensures you get the most out of the facilities.

“I also think there is a need for a new type of planning for how to conduct your teaching, such as which screens to use for what,” says Per-Arne Oldenberg. “For example, there is no ordinary whiteboard, so you have to decide which screens will display your presentation and which screen to write on.”

Per-Arne Oldenberg also points out all the opportunities available for distance education students. For instance, the use of the equipment in the room is actually adapted for them, so they do not only feel like radio listeners, but rather be as present as currently possible.

Praised book mentioned again

In 2018, Ulrica Söderlind at the Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts received the Gourmand Cookbook Awards for her unique book on cuisine. This March, she participated in a Paris exhibition on the previous years' best books about food and beverages.

Ulrica Söderlind's book *Religion and diet in a multi-religious city* deals with the meeting between religion through cuisine in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia.

"My interest for Georgia came during my archaeology studies, through a finding of what seems to be the world's oldest cultivated grapevines. I travelled there for an excavation and was fascinated by how close to one another Jews, Christians and Muslims lived in Tbilisi. I've worked a lot with food, both at restaurants and as a researcher, and found it intriguing to study the role of gastronomy in this peaceful coexistence."

In 2017, the book took home first prize in the category 'Cookbook for peace' which is a form of Nobel Peace Prize in gastronomy literature. Ulrica Söderlind has also participated at the Gourmand World Summit in Paris as one of Sweden's representatives for the previous three years' best literature on food and beverages.

"It's rewarding to see that scientific books also have a place there," she says and adds "My book is no typical cookbook. Not many of those have a methodology chapter." ●

JESSICA LARSSON SVANLUND



PHOTO: ULRIKA BERGFORS

From the archives

PHOTO: ARCHIVE AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS FROM UMEÅ UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. THE ÅKE SÖRLIN ARCHIVE.



Lunch tray from the 60s and 70s

Food has always been of great interest to people. For obvious reasons.

NOWADAYS, NOT ONLY the food itself is of importance, but also how it is grown and produced – preferably local and sustainable. And it should be nutritious and tasty. And everyone should stock up for a potential crisis.

Inspiration for your cooking is in abundance. All channels offer cooking shows with professional chefs and home cooks from around the world competing in or showing off their cooking skills.

Presentation is of great importance. It is safe to say that this 60s or 70s lunch from Universum does not particularly whet your appetite. Those who were here then recall that a lunch cost SEK 6.90 at "Snabben" at Universum, with a discount card. The queue was windingly long and the food was served on plastic trays by dinner ladies. And the selection? Dish of the day.

For a luxury lunch, you could choose the fancier section in Universum, called Grillen, where a meal still cost under SEK 10.

If coffee and a bun was filling enough, you had to cough up SEK 1.50.

For a few years, there was also a gourmet restaurant – "Gastro". That is the closest we come to current day restaurants and what students at the Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts learn. ●

INGER NILSSON



The common basic values – something you have to work on

What are the University's common basic values? A project group has worked intensively to develop materials that truly make everyone at the University reflect. Not just for now, but all the time.

TEXT Inger Nilsson **PHOTO** Malin Grönborg



Henna Harinen, Cecilia Elofsson and Ola Nilsson at the Faculty Office of Medicine discussed various dilemmas they have been faced with and how to act.

COMMITMENT FROM employees is needed for the work with the University's common basic values – based on the state sector's basic values – to work.

A group of employees at the Faculty Office of Medicine was first to discuss their opinions about the common basic values and hold discussions based on material that the project group had developed.

The work with these basic values took place on an afternoon in which the group tested a team-building exercise that consisted of discussing various 'dilemmas' and thinking about how you would or should behave if you yourself were involved in such a situation.

For example, dilemmas concerned research environments, personal relations, work environment or the support (or lack of support) from managers and leaders at the workplace. The sometimes really tricky questions could involve how to draw the boundary between work and private life as a government official, or how to express oneself on social media.

Here is an example of an everyday dilemma: A departmental administrator is feeling stressed out over all the incoming information and that many colleagues expect him to prioritise their specific tasks. He attempts to examine his process and see how he actually prioritises things. What is the most important thing to do? Does he work his way through each case or task in the order they came in? Or does he try to assess what is most important or pressing? Does he prioritise colleagues with a high status or informal power? Or those he likes most as they are always nice? Or those he is most afraid of, who get angry and shout? It is something worth thinking about. And the answer is perhaps not entirely obvious.

Following the exercise, a discussion with Cecilia Elofsson and Maria Nordström, two of the participants, indicates how important they think it is to work with common basic values.

"These discussions are like adding a little extra fuel to continue our joint work with common basic values," says Cecilia Elofsson, faculty office secretary at the Faculty Office of Medicine.

THEME *Basic values*



Gunilla Mårald and Anna Gåfväls took on a couple of dilemmas during their practice in March.

“As a government official, you can be faced with big and small dilemmas, several times a month.”

Suggestions have come from university employees for the various dilemmas that are currently available as working material for the faculties and departments to work with. Such things that employees or students have thought about or even experienced themselves.

“One case we discussed, I could have written myself,” says Cecilia Elofsson. “Many of the dilemmas we talked about in this exercise have happened or may very well happen.”

MANY CONCERNS WERE raised when the entire group gathered to discuss what they had come up with.

“What can you do if something happens? Should you say something?”

Others noted that this is something we need to practice all the time. There were also those who were concerned that the work and ideas in the basic values should reach all levels of the University.

“There may be different interpretations if you have your own values that you think are more important,” ponders Maria Nordström, research coordinator at the Faculty Office of Medicine.

“Yes, before we started work on this, it was probably not everyone that directly thought about basic values, or at least no one talked about it,” says Cecilia Elofsson.

They point out, however, that this is a problem for the University and therefore it is good that it is raised and discussed.



Maria Nordström, research coordinator at the Faculty Office of Medicine.

“As a government official, you can be faced with big and small dilemmas, several times a month,” says Cecilia Elofsson.

Participants in the exercise were also careful to point out that the work on these values is something that needs to be followed up. So they expressed a desire for feedback on the views put forward in their work – and were there and then promised a follow-up.

“It’s also important to reach everyone,” says Cecilia Elofsson.

WHAT SHOULD YOU do to solve problems that can occur at a workplace?

“I think that we can support each other when it comes to handling different situations,” says Maria Nordström.

Though ideally, no dilemmas should arise at the University.

“Exactly. Prevention is preferable,” says Cecilia Elofsson. “I get so taken aback when people are nasty. I therefore believe that we need to work on responding to that type of behaviour. This applies to all categories of faculty and staff. And we have to begin somewhere.”

“That’s when a common approach is important,” concurs Maria Nordström.

The exercise conducted in March by the group at the Faculty Office of Medicine is not the only time they worked with their own and the University’s common basic values.

“We’ve had meetings and discussions, with everyone participating,” says Cecilia Elofsson. “It was good.”

They haven’t only been thinking about what to do in the event that something happens that shouldn’t have happened.

“Consequences for bad behaviour is also vital,” says Maria and Cecilia decisively.

Exactly what kind of consequence is a little harder to say, though.

A reprimand, a warning. Something more for repeat offenders?

Those who participated in the exercise with the University’s common basic values dared not believe it would directly lead to a perfect life at the University.

“Probably not. We might need more fuel again in a few months,” says Cecilia Elofsson with a laugh. ●



Dilemmas to contemplate

The project group for the common basic values work has worked intensely for years on gathering informational material to work on and discuss at all workplaces.

“IT’S IMPORTANT TO get the chance to practise handling tough everyday dilemmas in a comfortable environment, at workplace meetings or planning days,” says Anna Mothander.

She has been project manager for the work with common basic values, which has dealt with the comments received from university employees.

“A large amount of material came in up to the beginning of 2018,” says Anna Mothander. “Since then, we’ve worked to develop a number of dilemmas – 47 dilemmas, to be precise – to try to produce a written product to discuss.”

In March, when Anna Mothander and the project group decided to do an exercise with the informational material they put together, a pilot group at the Faculty Office of Medicine was picked out to discuss some dilemmas.

The path towards this exercise, however, required a significant amount of effort. The material would be put into more concrete terms, so that its intentions would be clear. This shows how employees at Umeå University can relate to the national common basic values for central government employees.

“WE’VE DEVELOPED A website, and have compiled a ‘dilemma bank’. We’ve produced a book. We’ve put together tutorial material.



PHOTO: MALIN GRÖNBORG

We’ve made a folder that all employees will receive and we’ve developed four films on common basic values,” says Anna Mothander.

The 47 dilemmas in the dilemma bank are intended as a support function in the training process, so that individuals can develop their abilities to handle tough situations and help build a good working culture.

The dilemmas that are discussed in the informational material are not entirely simple to provide clear and consistent answers to.

“There aren’t any answers to these dilemmas. It’s often an issue of grey zones. Perhaps we can agree at our workplace on how to act when a similar situation arises.”

It is not enough, however, to say that you have read the book and folder, and seen the films to be prepared if there is a problem.

“We haven’t previously developed products in this way, but it’s also the leader’s responsibility to create a role model for the common basic values and provide the opportunity to have a dialogue on values,” says Anna Mothander. “This is a constant work in progress that must continue. We can’t stop here.” ●

INGER NILSSON

“The work with common basic values is all about gender equality”

Tomas Brage and Inger Lövkrona are researchers at Lund University, a male natural scientist and a female humanist, respectively. Together, they work with meeting researchers and discussing common basic values in workshops. Issues they raise strike the exposed nerve of the academic culture.

TEXT Jonas Lidström **PHOTO** Gunnar Menander



IN 2014, A CENTRAL project on common basic values was initiated at Lund University. The objective was to work out an educational material, but also to revise the wording of how the University’s basic values were formulated.

One of the project managers appointed was Tomas Brage, a professor of physics who has long worked actively with gender equality issues within academia. Inger Lövkrona, now professor emerita of ethnology, joined later on during the course of the project.

Tomas Brage admits that he was initially hesitant about the assignment:

“This thing with common basic values didn’t feel like something I really was passionate about. But in the work with the project plan, we realised that the basic values or *core values* were a possible angle of approach to gender equality and norms within academia. That’s when it got interesting.”

As a gender researcher, Inger Lövkrona supports the choice of focus: it is in the matter of gender equality that the common basic values for central government employees and the academic values come into conflict with each other.

“Gender equality work is perceived as a direct threat to academic freedom,” she says. “It threatens conceptions of meritocracy and academic objectivity.”

The common basic values project produced a report in an anthology format titled *Core values work in academia* (Swedish: *Värdegrundarbete i akademien*), where par-

ticipating researchers highlighted the issue both from a theoretical and a practical perspective.

“The second part of the report is solely about methods and support, and the material Thomas and I are basing our work on,” says Inger Lövkrona. “We come in with research-based knowledge.”

The report contains a comprehensive bullet list with practical advice that holds up well.

“What you should begin with is awareness. You start with workshops where employees can discuss different types of discrimination. That’s a good place to start,” continues Inger Lövkrona.

“But a solid methodological support in itself is not enough. Without the will and prioritisation from management, you won’t get very far.”

“There’s also a need for people who can do the job, that have the qualifications to lead workshops and engage the discussion. Unfortunately, they are few and far between. It says something that I’m still doing this ten years after my retirement.”

INGER LÖVKRONA ALSO suggests, with some harshness in her voice, that the practical work with common basic values often requires an additional trait that she herself does not possess.

“A man needs to lead the discussion in such workshops,” she says. “Having Tomas Brage plays a crucial role. At departments

of science and medicine, this is a pivotal difference.”

Tomas Brage does not disagree:

“Gender inequality is very distinct: such as when I speak, people tend to listen. It’s terrible that this structure exists. But you just have to grit your teeth and adapt to the conditions. Many times I can say things that go unchallenged that Inger could never express herself.”

Tomas Brage would like to recommend that more men follow his example:

“The small number of men who do this are in high demand. I receive 20–30 invitations to participate in different contexts and talk about gender equality in academia. I’m on my way to Vienna now, for example.”

“We men have had such an advantage with this prevailing system, like a free pass. But if you realise what situation we’re in, you would naturally want to make a change. It’s not a women’s issue, it’s a matter of living up to the fundamental basic values.”

Could a department at Umeå University simply invite Tomas Brage and Inger Lövkrona to hold workshops as a way to kick off its work with common basic values? Inger Lövkrona does not see it as being difficult to organise:

“I actually worked at Umeå University between 1986 and 1991 and I wouldn’t be opposed to a re-visit,” she says. “In fact, Thomas and I more often receive invitations from international organisations than from other Swedish universities.” ●

CARL
JOHAN
DE GEER /
THE BIG
MISCON-
CEPTION

BILDMUSEET
12 APRIL - 15 SEPTEMBER, 2019

UMEÅ
ACADEMY
OF FINE
ARTS /
MEANWHILE

BILDMUSEET
3 MAY - 19 MAY, 2019

BILDMUSEET
15 MARCH - 08 SEPTEMBER, 2019

SWEDISH
PICTURE
BOOK OF
THE YEAR /
COME HOME
LAILA



With an eye on microbes – and the big picture

Finding new antibiotics is one of the most difficult tasks of present-day research. Felipe Cava studies cell wall mechanisms on a molecular level. His research contributes to improved methods to fight infectious diseases.

TEXT: Inger Nilsson **PHOTO:** Mattias Pettersson

FELIPE CAVA IS SENIOR lecturer in infection biology at the Department of Molecular Biology and he is also associated to MIMS (The Laboratory for Molecular Infection Medicine Sweden). He likes his lab and is proud of his colleagues – a multicultural and independent group with a burning interest in science.

“I try to gain a fundamental understanding of microbes. They are small, but complex. I’d like to see the big picture in my research. Nowadays, I spend more time on administrative tasks, but I’ve learnt to observe and enjoy science through the eyes of my colleagues,” says Felipe Cava. “I also spend a lot of time applying for grants to enable my colleagues to get the time and stability to turn ideas into results.”

When it comes to funding, Felipe Cava can take a backseat for a while. His team has recently been granted over

SEK 25 million by the Swedish Research Council. In addition, they received the biggest grant in the field, from the same research council, of another SEK 10 million.

The larger sum was granted to the project “Membrane microdomain disassembly in *Staphylococcus aureus* inhibits MRSA antibiotic resistance” and the smaller sum was granted to the project “What regulates the bacterial cell wall homeostasis?”.

FELIPE CAVA’S RESEARCH group studies the bacterial cell wall to see how microbes – organisms too small to be seen with the naked eye – adapt to different environments.

Albeit, the large grants were not the decisive point in Felipe Cava’s career decision. His interest in microbiology came early during his childhood in Madrid, Spain.

“I love science, I knew that’s what I wanted to spend my time on. When I was 14 years old, I used to talk to my teacher about interesting articles I had read. I was inspired ►

Felipe Cava

Does: Works at the Department of Molecular Biology at Umeå University and leads a lab of 15 people.

Born: 1977.

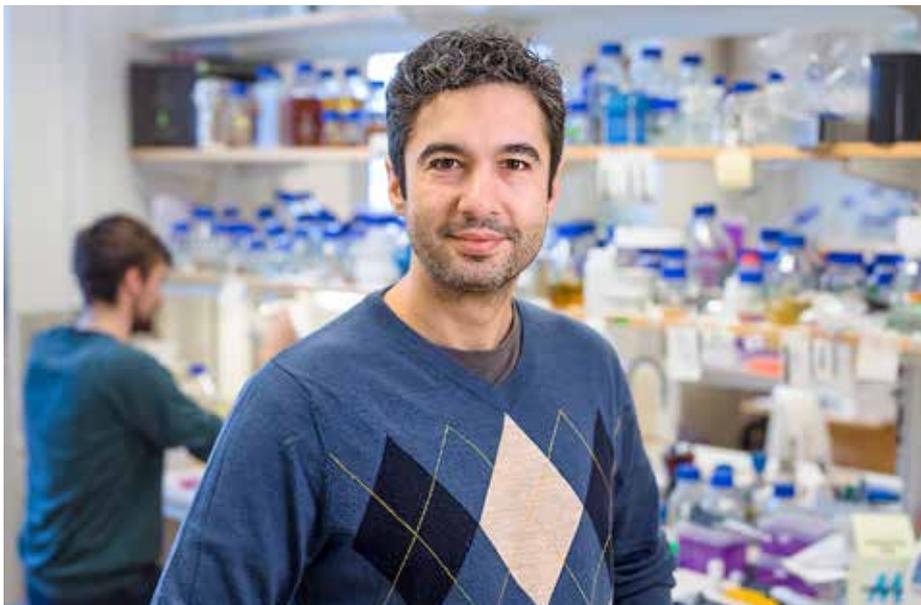
Latest book read: Post Office by Charles Bukowski. Other than that mostly scientific articles.

Favourite film: *Un lugar en el mundo* directed by Adolfo Aristarain.

Favourite food: All types of cheese with a nice glass of wine.

A photograph of Felipe Cava in a laboratory. He is wearing a white lab coat over a dark blue sweater and is looking intently at a petri dish he is holding in his right hand. In his left hand, he holds a stack of petri dishes. The laboratory is filled with various pieces of equipment, including shelves stocked with bottles and containers, a rack of blue microcentrifuge tubes, and a stack of petri dishes on the counter. In the background, another person is working at a bench. The lighting is bright, and the overall atmosphere is one of focused scientific work.

“I need to know that I’m contributing to the greater picture, even if I can’t answer all the questions myself.”



by his love for biology. No doubt my classmates thought I was a nuisance,” says a smiling Felipe Cava.

Professor José Berenguer at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid also meant a lot. Felipe Cava worked hard and even as a student, he got to work with the professor in his lab. Despite a schedule full of lectures, he still visited the lab at nights until he graduated and could take on his doctoral education.

“My favourite was microbiology, it was the small microbes that caught my attention. My parents had never pursued university studies, but knew how important an education is. I had the freedom of choosing. I have five siblings and we were all given the chance to study. And the result has been remarkable. There is now a pharmacist, biochemist, eye specialist, lawyer and an architect in the family.”

IN 2007, HE COMPLETED his doctorate in molecular biology/microbiology at Centro de Biología Molecular Severo Ochoa (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid-CSIC), an institute founded by Nobel laureate Severo Ochoa.

Felipe Cava received the Best Doctoral Thesis Award. The requirement said two published articles – he published 18.

“The moment of truth came after my postdoc. That’s when I had to decide – aim for the stars or take a step back. All or nothing. I was already in my 30s with a family.”

IT TURNED OUT as a lucky shot that Felipe Cava had completed his postdoc with Professor Matthew Waldor at the Waldor Lab at Harvard University in the US.

“Matthew Waldor, my postdoc mentor, has been the most influential person in my research career,” says Felipe Cava. It was prestigious to work there with an abundance of competent researchers.

In a record two and a half years, he authored three articles in prestigious Science and EMBO J, among others. He discovered that many bacteria emitted D-amino acids, an important molecule in many processes in bacterial physiology and microbial ecology.

In December 2010, he moved back to Spain. But times were tough.

“I advanced to senior lecturer, but due to the financial crisis, it was nearly impossible to get a tenure.”

That was when a previous encounter with Bernt Eric Uhlin from MIMS at Umeå University played an important role.

“I had held a speech at an international summit and met Bernt Eric Uhlin. He wondered if I would consider coming to Sweden. But I had just moved back to Spain from the US and thought I had found my dream job. He gave me his card in case I wanted to find out what my options were in Sweden as a young researcher. And it sounded interesting.”

Felipe Cava even received two grants in tough international competition, both as a Wallenberg Fellow and at MIMS despite the resistance from his Spanish employer who was keen on keeping him in Madrid.

“They had a good programme. But I’m an international soul. I’ve lived in France, Italy and the US, and figured I might as well live and work in Umeå. In Spain, I struggled to get SEK 100,000 for research, I got SEK 3 million straight away here. I also had 18

researcher colleagues, so I had to take the chance when I had it.”

Wallenberg Fellows and MIMS is a finished chapter, but it gave Felipe Cava the opportunity to show that he belongs among the global elite. Now, he has a fixed position, leads a successful lab with 15 people and has secured funding for the upcoming six years.

THIS SUMMER, FELIPE Cava will have spent six years in Umeå and plans to stay. But regardless of how much he loves the lab, his children are still the most important part of his life.

“Blanca was two and Carlos only five months when we moved here six years ago, and now they even speak Swedish with each other.”

Felipe Cava sighs when the topic of language comes up. He has still not quite mastered the Swedish language, it’s not been necessary. English is the applicable language at work.

“I take Swedish for immigrants courses and Swedish for Academics, but since I travel so much, I struggle to go to all sessions. I also do a whole lot of recruitment. My kids are trying to encourage me to learn more, but I think I’d need a year of intense focus to learn Swedish properly.”

Felipe Cava knows that his research is valuable, to himself, to his colleagues and to Umeå University. Last year, he received the Erik Fernström Award for young promising researchers. He is not forgotten in Spain either, where he received the 2017 Jaime Ferran Award.

“Microbiology does not usually generate big awards,” he says proudly. “Appropriations have also increased visibility for Umeå University. And Anna Överby Wernstedt also received SEK 25 million for her research.”

BESIDES HIS OWN RESEARCH, he holds courses, trains teachers and holds motivational talks to medical students. He also makes time for spare time activities and socialising.

“Apart from spending time with my kids, I also want to hang out with friends. I like going to the gym. It helps me think – and to disconnect from thoughts ... I like to spend time in nature, and to run. I ran a half-marathon last year, and now I’m training for a marathon.”

You could say that his career as a researcher is also a form of marathon. A marathon without a finishing line in sight.

“The aim is to develop new antibiotics that work better. There is no end to research. There are always new hypotheses and more work to take on.” ●

A day at the Police Education

Role-play helps in finding the right tactics



A day at the Police Education



Carola Fahlen and Anna Tenström chatting with first-term students.



Students Jennica and Nathalie look for traces of evidence.

Facts:

The Police Education is given at five locations in Sweden: Umeå University, Södertörn University, the University of Borås, Linneaus University and Malmö University. Umeå, Växjö and Borås also offer distance learning for police students.

For the autumn 2018 application period, 15,776 individuals applied to the Police Education starting in autumn 2019. That is a record and roughly 4,000 more than the last application period. 43 per cent of the applicants were women.

To be admitted, you need to be able to swim, have a driving licence, pass certain medical and mental health examinations, and be of good physique.

Source: The Swedish Defence Recruitment Agency

It is an early spring morning outside the new Police Education Building. The sun is reflected in the big glass artwork decorating the façade above the entrance to the most modern educational premise for the police in Europe.

TEXT: Jessica Larsson Svanlund **PHOTO:** Mattias Pettersson

THE FIRST STUDENTS moved in at the beginning of March 2018. It is a 6,200 square metre building customised for its purpose with classrooms, offices and conference rooms, but also includes a garage for police cars, a large hall for exercises with windows in three directions, an interrogation room and premises adapted to practicing police activities.

Conny Tärnklev and Roger Söderlund greet us when we arrive. Conny is a director of studies and a teacher. Roger is a police education teacher and participant in a national project to develop methods for police activities. Our tour starts in the tactics room. A series of rooms that looks like one giant apartment and plays a part in some form of labyrinth with lockable doors that allows for the

‘apartment’ to be adapted in size and shape during exercises.

“It’s important to learn the right tactics for your own and other’s safety,” says Roger Söderlund.

IN A CLASSROOM, we meet Carola Fahlen and Anna Renström from the Department of Education. They are talking to a group of first-year students who have practised their first role play. The teachers ask for the students’ reflections.

“You were rather frustrated,” says one student who played a party-goer to her classmate who had acted as a police officer.

“But I tried to be clear,” responds the other student.

In this exercise, the students played actors, or figurants, but sometimes they also call in external resourc-



Roger Söderlund, police teacher and Conny Tärnklev, director of studies and teacher.



Armin and his student colleague practise making an arrest. The teacher Andreas Nilsson acts as suspect.



Fingerprints are found on a mug.



Theoretical studies include law, criminology and political science.

es, of all ages and various backgrounds. (If you are interested in taking part, just let them know.)

“We are good at using several educational methods – it turns into a favourable combination between theory and practice, as students often say that they learn theory through the practical exercises. During the practice, everything suddenly becomes clear,” say Conny and Roger.

THEY ALSO DESCRIBE how the Police Education has emerged in Umeå since the Swedish National Police Board awarded Umeå the contract to offer police education. In the year 2000, the first 40 students arrived, and since then, the most drastic changes are the new building, an increase in student numbers and the strong integration of academic subjects in the education. I ask Conny and Roger what is most important for people to know about the education in their opinions.

“The strong commitment from all members of staff,” says Conny Tärnklev. “From everyone – teachers from all departments, police teachers and administrators alike. They are so passionate about this.”

“I agree. There is a noticeable curiosity too, as everyone wants to develop together,” says Roger Söderlund.

WE DECIDE TO PAY a visit to the garage, where the police cars are lined up. But before we get there, the two teachers want to show us another couple of rooms. Conny opens a door and we arrive at a small sports bar. All necessary details are here – beer taps, a bar, TV screens and sports memorabilia on the walls. According to Conny, all the items have been donated and furnished by the members of staff, and the room is used to practise police activities in a bar environment. There is a positive vibe throughout the building – and the humour is visible through the names on the fake drinks menu – ‘Al Capone’ and ‘Axel Foley’.

Next door is ‘Krister’s Cornershop’ full of videocassettes, magazines and empty food packaging. The packaging is apparently custom-made by food suppliers particularly for the Police Education. I ask if students understand what videocassettes are and I am met with a hearty laugh.

“They probably think they’re some type of books!”

JONAS HANSSON GIVES a glimpse into research at the Police Education. I catch him on the phone on his way home from Stockholm and a meeting in a project aimed to evaluate electroshock weapons.

“We conduct all types of research projects relating to policing. However, since it’s not a research subject itself, we need to apply for funding in collaboration with researchers from public health or law, for instance.”

He is active in a number of projects assigned by the Police Authority and international networks. An important aspect of research is to spread new knowledge to active police officers, police teachers and students.

“It’s so important for us to integrate research and education, but it’s easier said than done, despite sharing the same building,” says Jonas Hansson.

Finally, what does it take to become a good police officer?

“It’s a profession that requires various skills. You need to be good at communicating and problem-solving. You need to be flexible, enjoy challenges and work well in a team,” say Conny and Roger. ●

Finally... **Anna Baranowska-Rataj**



PHOTO: PRZEMYSŁAW CHROSTOWSKI

Inspiring exchange of ideas

Anna Baranowska-Rataj is an associate professor and senior lecturer at the Department of Sociology and researcher at the Centre for Demographic and Ageing Research.

A COLUMN IN AKTUM by Christer Nordlund [from December 2017] highlighted that Umeå University has always had ambitions to overcome the boundaries of a closed, elitist higher education institution, separated from the outside world and divided by internal hierarchies. This goal is of course quite challenging in practice. One division, which seems to be hard, is the one between research and teaching. In principle, it is obvious that academics should do both: create new knowledge and educate new generations. In practice, reaching academic excellence and being a devoted teacher are often seen as competing or even incompatible goals. Overloaded and stressed out by competition pressure, academics tend to view teaching duties as a necessary evil rather than a chance for intellectual exchange with young people. At the same time, students seem to be willing to knock on our office doors mainly to find out about the deadlines or to negotiate the grades. It feels like students actually rarely get the opportunity to find out about our ongoing research projects. A growing divide between academics who focus on research and those who specialise in teaching does not help to alleviate these problems.

MY COLLEAGUES AND I did try to overcome this barrier on a small scale, in our project financed by the Horizon 2020 programme. I would like to share my experiences from this endeavour. As the title *Social Exclusion of Youth in Europe: Cumulative Disadvantage, Coping Strategies, Effective Policies and Transfer* suggests, the central goal of the project was to examine the implications of labour market insecurities for youth's risks of poverty, their health and well-being as well as their possibilities to reach autonomy.

Giving young people voice in our project was ensured by a number of measures. We conducted in-depth interviews with nearly 400 young people from across Europe to enable their stories to be told in their own words. We organised a series of graffiti wall events and photographic competitions where youth could express their views on what it means to become an adult for young people today. We also engaged representatives of youth organisations in meetings with policymakers. Perhaps most importantly though, rather than treating young people as 'study subjects', we engaged them in research activities. Students then became responsible for collecting and analysing data, as well as describing results in bachelor and master theses. Our students made a substantial contribution to the project, not least thanks to the efforts made by coordinators at the Sociology Programme who actively informed students about the project and encouraged them to get involved. Some of these students subsequently received job positions as doctoral students at Umeå University and the University of Gothenburg.

Overall, the exchange of thoughts and ideas with our younger colleagues has been inspiring and the project itself has benefited from it a lot. Still, these experiences have also made me reflect on how we, academics at Umeå University, could become more open and flexible in combining our commitments. I'm quite convinced that we could organise such collaborations more often and in a more structured way. ●

ANNA BARANOWSKA-RATAJ

Would you like to write an Aktum column?

Get in touch with the editorial board!
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