Dear all,

Welcome back from your summer holidays – the break most of us need in order to recharge our batteries, regain our work motivation and become eager to take on the new challenges that are just around the corner. Students from all over the world have arrived in Lund and, as usual, there are many who want to study at our faculty. Unfortunately, we are forced to reduce the number of study places on our freestanding courses, which has been discussed in previous dean’s bulletins, but we hope that things will be back to normal soon. What is a university if you can’t take courses and put together a tailored programme that suits you specifically?

In terms of research, I am happy to see that several researchers have applied for this year’s ERC Advanced Grants. I sincerely wish you all good luck. It is a good sign that so many of you have made such progress in your research careers that you feel ready to take this step, and, even if you are not awarded a grant this year, you will receive valuable feedback on your application and can write an even better one next year.

The other day, there was a rerun on TV of my favourite show, Fråga Lund, with our colleague from the Department of Biology, Jessica Abbot, as one of five on the panel of experts. I have always found this type of programme enjoyable and entertaining, while filling a strong human need. We all have questions about a number of different things that we would like to have explained to us in an informed and innovative way, without unnecessary technical terms. If the expert also manages to bring out the humour in things, entertainment is a sure thing. Jessica’s performance was commendable, just as you would expect, and the other experts were also excellent. However, the show focused more on the host than I had anticipated, and I wanted to hear more from the researchers, so I was somewhat disappointed in the setup. Unfortunately, this simplification of serious entertainment seems to me a general trend in the entertainment industry today.

We have also managed to fit in the faculty’s summer party, and as always, it was a nice mix of intellectual challenges, good food and drinks and musical performances. This was our fifth year of holding this party, and this year, for the first time, it was all in English. The topic of the panel discussion was speed, and the four panellists came from different areas of science (astronomy, biology, geology and chemistry) and applied the concept in completely different ways. As usual, the hour was instructive and entertaining and included a very good moderator. Afterwards, the choir of the science students’ union was to provide the entertainment, which it did through a potpourri of traditional ballads and classic pop songs, and we would love to have them back in the future. We were also extremely lucky with the weather, and Tycho – our new staff member – watched over us all.

Olov Sterner, Dean