Dear all,

The Faculty of Science has recently established a labour market council. The council will work to expand and improve contacts between our undergraduate and doctoral students and the labour market outside the University. Our students are to more easily find suitable work once they have completed their studies, and employers will clearly see the benefit of having scientists on their team. We have always had a problem with our identity as natural scientists – it seems as if many employers do not understand what a scientist is. The engineer, on the other hand, is a role familiar to most people, or so they think, even though engineers as a group are more heterogeneous than natural scientists. Recently, the daily Sydsvenskan listed the degree programmes that are considered most important for the future of society, and this, of course, included engineering but not science, despite the fact that they are equally needed. I am convinced that a well-functioning labour market council will be able to change this perception.

Another reason for establishing the council pertains to a public agency requirement. The new quality assurance system of higher education, launched by the Swedish Higher Education Authority, requires us to describe and justify how our external engagement takes place, to ensure the practical use of our study programmes and that our students and doctoral students are prepared for professional life.

Another recently established function is a working group which, on behalf of the vice-chancellor, will investigate LU's opportunities to establish operations at SVS (Science Village Scandinavia), located between MAX IV and ESS. The working group consists of the deans or pro-deans of the three faculties of science, medicine and engineering; the heads of the departments of chemistry and physics; one representative from LU Estates; two students; and, when possible, Pro Vice-Chancellor Stacey Sörensen. Its remit, by the end of the year, is to present a proposal on what we think would be good and realistic. The premise is that we really want to take full advantage of the two research facilities as, after all, LU has invested a lot of money in them, and that some of our activities could potentially benefit from having them nearby. There will also be an opportunity to review the need for more suitable premises for particularly chemistry and physics. For a long time, we have discussed whether establishing and operating a new campus over there would be possible and appropriate, and some are for and others are against. However, by now we only have a relatively small window for making a decision, IF this is something we want to do. Things are moving fast and there are other higher education institutions and business who would like to move in. But so far, LU has dibs. In this context, I would also like to clarify that a decision has not yet been taken – far from it. It would be an estimated 5–6 minute tram ride between the Department of Chemistry/Physics and SVS – that’s all – so the fact that SVS is located outside central Lund is not a strong argument. Meanwhile, it is of course necessary to estimate the value of having the facilities at arm’s length, and to take into account that we have outgrown our current premises. New construction at SVS costs money, which of course is negative, and the option is to build something new on our current campus or renovate premises to meet modern standards. This presents a complicated equation, but we will solve it.
Our faculty already conducts certain activities in the area – at MAX IV – so the issue is not entirely new.

Olov Sterner, dean