

Elisa Hyytiäinen 4.9.2023

Dear Chancellor, Rector, members of the university community and friends of our university,

The university's strategy states that a thriving and inclusive university community is a prerequisite for our success, and one of our goals is to make our university the best place to study and work. Community spirit is an important value of ours and its importance has been underlined as we have faced various crises in recent years. Community spirit is built on smooth collaboration and action, interaction, being together, social relationships and, above all, trust and belonging. Community spirit increases participation, commitment and motivation, and supports and promotes openness.

After the tormenting corona years, everyday life has gradually returned to normal. Part of remote working and studying has returned to the campuses. New remote work practices and customs are here to stay, and that's good. In addition to remote working, we also need encounters in the workspaces and lecture halls, corridors and lunch places. Many things are often resolved in a corridor conversation, no need to write messages and wait for answers. Face-to-face encounters have more humanity in the midst of all social media. We see each other, perhaps we already dare to shake hands, we tune in together. The energy level of a conversation can vary widely and is much easier to influence in person than on a computer screen. Let's talk about it, perhaps a little off-topic, taking unexpected paths that often open up new alternatives to the issues at stake. In a face-to-face meeting, you can see how you are perceived and possibly discover new aspects of your own attitude. You take time from the other person and give the other person your time, focusing on that moment without doing other things. Organise meetings of teams and units, agree on joint attendance times. Come along and brainstorm together how best to achieve smooth working, teaching, research and learning, both remotely and on-site at the university.

How can we foster a community spirit, both in leadership and as members of the community? Community spirit is promoted by shared goals, the opportunity to participate and influence. Cooperation is worth and should be encouraged. In addition to this, there is also an emphasis on not-so-formal events and socialising. As members of a community, we can all strengthen our community spirit in many ways. Let's get to know each other, support each other, give positive feedback, pay attention to each other and, in particular, listen and be heard. Let's say hello and be fair. Community spirit needs all of us and we can all strengthen our own work community and cooperation skills. There are a lot of different study materials and courses available for building up these skills, for example, in the university's personnel training. Leadership and interaction trainer Sari Kuusela has stated that improving the community spirit gives you the room to focus on what is important, because you no longer need to take advantage when you can rely on the support of others. Common views emerge instead of competing territories. You can take your time to do your best and not show off so much, and suddenly be enchanted by all the special things we can do together.

Supervisors play a significant role in creating and maintaining a community spirit. The university's strategy states that, with supportive managerial work and genuinely community-inclusive leadership, we enable every university student to participate in managing common issues and to experience success in work and studies. Our association has annually elected the University of

Helsinki's Supervisor of the Year, so far 23 times. The proposals made by the staff repeatedly emphasise the manager's accessibility, firmness in a good way, empathy and compassion, planning and doing things together, raising and handling difficult issues, and encouragement and strong trust.

The university's strategy is based on the fact that the university's structures support democratic empowerment. We already have several places and opportunities to make an impact. Participate in the university's joint events and activities. For example, there will be health and safety elections in the autumn. Candidates are sought for health and safety representatives, deputy health and safety representatives and staff representatives on campus health and safety committees. Working in an occupational health and safety organisation is an excellent channel for influencing the well-being of our work community. In the autumn, an initiative and idea channel for the entire university community will also open, so now to brainstorm alone or together initiatives for the development of our university's operations. I also encourage you to participate in the work of the university's staff and student organisations. In addition to lobbying, there is a broader perspective on university, networking and, at best, lifelong friends, not forgetting the community spirit.

Community spirit is also about valuing and respecting each other. News coverage in the summer tends to be limited. Last summer, however, there was a flurry of news thanks to the start of the new government in our country with its zero tolerance and racism debates. Our university has been doing meritorious equality work for a long time. Now more than ever, there is an order for equality and non-discrimination work. It is important for the community spirit that each member of the community feels needed and accepted. Each of us can use our own actions to eliminate discriminatory practices and create a more equal work and study culture. So respect, don't mock, don't assume, communicate, intervene when necessary and apologise. We all have the right to a safe working and learning environment where we can be ourselves and feel respected and valued as our full selves. I will sum it up in the words of the song by J. Karjalainen: "We are all heroes when we look each other in the eye, we are heroes in life, everyone!" We are not just workers, teachers, researchers, students here - we are the university.

I wish all of you heroes a

Happy academic year

Ett gott läsår!

Hyvää lukuvuotta