

Dear *Rector Magnificus*!

Dear academic family, dear friends!

For almost a year now, Tartu University, the native home of the Estonian academic spirit, has existed seemingly without an inaugurated rector. And yet we know that the new rector has been on his post for two months already, and all we need to do today is to perform the last formality: to inaugurate the rector with all due regard to the academic tradition.

Furthermore, we know that Tartu University has not been without a leader for even a moment. Here, I would like to express my esteem to the Acting Rector, Professor Tõnu Lehtsaar. And most importantly – in the course of this year, many arguments in Tartu University have reached a definite conclusion:

It has become clear to you how and in which direction the *primus inter pares* of our universities is to develop.

You have elected a new Rector, who has the duty to take Estonia's leading centre of research and higher education to the goals you have set.

Dear Rector, Professor Alar Karis!

Let the chain of office that I shall bestow on you symbolise the illustriousness of your position and the ensuing responsibility. You will, in a moment, become President of an academic state with a 375 year history.

I am sure you will do very well in this new role. At our first meeting last October, we were glad to see that we speak the same language. I was prepared to discuss with you the role of the Estonian University of Life Sciences in the landscape of Estonian higher education. But almost immediately, we were conversing on biotechnology, the opportunities offered by the European Union, the present and the future of research in Estonia. Our conversation was very interesting and edifying. And we have had more of such edifying discussions, both at the meetings of the Academic Advisory Board and on other occasions.

In a similar manner, you will edify Tartu University. I am sure that the University is in good hands.

Dear Rector!

With all my heart, I wish you strength and far-reaching vision. May you become a champion and a custodian angel of the free academic spirit!