



*Promotorns tal – Conferrer's Speech*

**Åbo Akademi doktorspromotion**

**ÅAU Doctoral Conferral 20.5.2022**

**Professor Mark S. Johnson**

Ärade Kansler, Rektor, idkare, gynnare och vänner av vetenskapen, mina damer och herrar, distinguished guests

*“The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things you do for others remain as your legacy.”*

Kalu Ndukwe Kalu, a Nigerian-American professor and docent at the University of Tampere, wrote this in “Citizenship: A Reality Far From Ideal.”

Sadly and far too often in human history we have seen how unchecked self-interest guides dramatic actions that affect many others on a broad scale, even world-wide, with all the horror that comes when too much power is invested in individuals where few brakes can be applied to stop their destructive actions. Such is the world as we see it now, close to our European neighborhood.

But as a humble individual and even for a university

*“... the things you do for others remain as your legacy.”*

We were proud to see that Åbo Akademi University was the first university in Finland that openly welcomed students and researchers from the Ukraine. Our rector also gave strong guidance to the university community to guard against negative actions aimed at students and staff of other nationalities.

For over two years the pandemic has also marked our souls. Åbo Akademi acted swiftly to the changing situation and dynamically embraced new approaches to teaching and, flexibility among our staff – a trademark of Åbo Akademi – meant that research gradually could take place on campus and deficiencies in training were dealt with in subsequent

courses. It is also heartening to see that the Foundation of Åbo Akademi University is now investing directly in doctoral training.

Åbo Akademi University is, on one hand, a minority language university supporting the Swedish speaking population and its unique cultural heritage along the Baltic Sea. On the other hand, Åbo Akademi is highly collaborative and international, attracting students and researchers from all over the world especially for post-graduate studies and postdoctoral training.

At Åbo Akademi University the expressed values and strategic aims that permeate the structure and function of the university have set the tone for our present behavior and future directions.

*“... the things you do for others remain as your legacy.”*

I quote, “Our activities are steered by the values of academic tradition in terms of the freedom of research and education as well as ethical responsibility. We endeavor to enhance diversity, inclusion, equality and sustainability.”

Åbo Akademi’s four faculties are encompassed by strategic research areas that support studies related to minorities, as well as tackling some of the most difficult – some might say “wicked” – problems facing us today: including climate change, solutions supporting the United Nations’ sustainability goals, the Baltic sea and its environment, and extending quality healthy years of an aging population.

Today marks the twenty-eight promotion ceremony at Åbo Akademi University; the first promotion ceremony, then of both Master’s and Doctoral degrees, took place at Åbo Akademi in 1927. Promotion ceremonies have a long history in Turku, with the first taking place in 1644, at the Royal Academy founded by Queen Kristina.

Ray Davis, in his Haiku, nicely expresses the doctoral research process, successfully tackled by the 90 doctors to be conferred at Åbo Akademi University today:

*“Challenging questions*

*Answers unexpected choice*

*New horizons born”*

New horizons! Although the pandemic was a hurdle to be jumped, you have learned to analyze, think independently, write critically and guide others – all valuable life-long learning skills that can be applied to any task or situation your future holds for you. Remember, you can go anywhere – make an unexpected choice, tackle new research areas, bring your experience to industry, benefit society and support good government. Today we recognize and honor your achievements, and we anticipate that you will ethically and wisely excel in your future endeavors!

The first record of an honorary doctor is from around 1470 at Oxford University and honorary doctor appointments have also been an important part of the Åbo Akademi University tradition. Today, we confer eight *Doctoris semisaecularis* – Jubilee Doctors, having earned their degree at Åbo Akademi 50 years ago; and thirteen *Doctors honoris causa* – honorary doctors; all for their valued contributions to Åbo Akademi and Finnish society.

Härmed övergår vi till att promovera doktorer i den ordning den akademiska traditionen påbjuder.

We hereby proceed to promote doctors in the order required by the academic tradition.