

## Competence is a far-reaching investment

*Riitta Rissanen, EdD, Rector, Lapland University of Applied Sciences*

The education offered by Finnish universities of applied science has undergone major renewals in recent years. As a result of structural development, we have been able to turn Lapland University of Applied Sciences into an impressive entity with a clear strategy. We are a pioneer in arctic expertise in our areas of emphasis as well as an internationally acclaimed educator, developer and partner.

LUC cooperation has given us a national front-row position as well as resources for renewal. These are excellent starting points for the years to come, making a change and implementing the policies of the [Vision for higher education and research in 2030](#).

How are we to renew Lapland University of Applied Sciences to ensure that our students, working and business life, personnel and partners will be able to also trust us in the future?

Competence and lifelong learning are essential issues to making a change in the work that we do. To us, it is evident that a growing number of our students are seeking new competence to further support their working careers. This can already be seen in, for example, the popularity of our master's degree programmes. Our corporate and working life partners are expecting new opportunities for product and service development and new information and research results to boost their innovations.

Our personnel and students have more voluminous connections to the working and business life than ever before. Our international partners are interested in the progressive competence and innovation environments that Lapland University of Applied Sciences and LUC cooperation can offer: simulation and virtual environments as well as progressive laboratories and smart workshops, to name but a few.

I strongly believe that the experts educated by Lapland University of Applied Sciences have a ton of potential and pioneer spirit, both on a national and international scale. In the future, and already now, we are aware that the time and place of learning are becoming less important. Instead, interaction, co-creation and networking are becoming increasingly essential. These

are skills that our university of applied sciences has been developing for several years now, while paying particular attention to the ways of managing distance as well as digital pedagogics. This way, learning becomes the most important skill related to working. This can be clearly seen in, for example, [the latest Government report on the future, dated 5 April 2018](#).

There is a lot of dormant potential available in the Finnish working and business life at the moment – and this is also true in Lapland. Research, development and innovation activities, alongside education, are a statutory part of the duties of universities of applied sciences. The innovation environments of Lapland University of Applied Sciences are acting as pioneers, as technology complements human competence.

Open innovation activities are based on trust and shared competence. It changes our learning and business environments and challenges students, staff and working life partners alike. For us, the driving forces behind the changes are, among others, the circular economy, extractive competence and the smart use of natural resources in general.

For many SMEs and public organisations, constant learning and new competence are more essential competitive factors than technological investments. This is the case in, for example, safety competence and the development of social welfare and health care services. Lapland University of Applied Sciences plays an important role in all of these innovation environments.

We are in further need of closer development cooperation with our alumni. Currently, we are not fully able to highlight the numerous open and versatile opportunities that we have to offer to maintain and develop a good connection to our former students after graduation.

At the moment, we are launching a fund-raising campaign to further enhance the competence capital of Lapland University of Applied Sciences. This is a topical and strategically significant opportunity to enforce Lapland University of Applied Sciences and promote the Northern Factor and Northern Pioneering.

The future of learning is full of opportunities – at Lapland University of Applied Sciences.

*Riitta Rissanen*