

# Rector's speech

## Doctoral Awards Ceremony

### Acting Rector Anne Borg's speech

Doctoral Awards Ceremony 14 November 2019  
The Aula, Main Building, Gløshaugen

«Dear new doctors, Honorary Prize winner Dr. Steinar Sælid, honored guests, dear colleagues and friends.

Congratulations! Today we are celebrating the creation of 201 new doctors at NTNU who have defended their thesis from January to June 2019, 110 of whom are here today.

You will soon receive your doctoral diplomas as tangible proof of your accomplishment; the highest academic degree achievable.

There are no shortcuts to a doctorate. It is about ambition, it is about hard work, it is about having a goal and never losing sight of that goal.

This has been common knowledge in these halls for more than a century.

If you look above the entrance to the library, you'll see these words of wisdom from 1910, etched in stone:

*Per aspera ad astra* – through adversity to the stars.

It is also about striving for quality.

Quality is essential in all research, whether it is basic or applied, whatever the area of research, and no matter who is doing it. The demand for quality should, and must, be absolute.

In NTNU's main strategy, *Knowledge for a better world*, the most ambitious goal of all is that by 2025, all our departments should have academic groups proven to be at a high international level in at least one of their core areas.

Ambitious, but also crucial, as we aim to become outstanding by international standards.

This also requires us, throughout the university, to seek out opportunities for collaboration with other leading knowledge-based communities throughout the world.

Five years ago, in 2014, May-Britt Moser and Edvard Moser from NTNU were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. They have over the years, achieved extraordinary academic breakthroughs and built the leading international Kavli Institute for Systems Neuroscience.

How did they get there? Among their many notable qualities - in addition to their scientific curiosity – is their ability and strong dedication to collaborate with the very best peers and colleagues throughout the world.

International collaboration is a major tool for improving quality, developing talent, and creating outstanding research environments. It is also about recognition and visibility.

In this context, *mobility* is important.

Every doctoral candidate at NTNU should be part of an international research community.

While working on your doctorate, you have already drawn inspiration from international research in your field. Many of you have collaborated with international colleagues and spent valuable time at universities abroad.

I will strongly encourage you to further develop an international network in the years to come. Knowledge knows no boundaries, and nor should we.

International collaboration is also key to solving the major challenges in the world; climate change, pollution, migration, hunger, conflicts, and terrorism.

All these global challenges will require research-based solutions, and combined efforts across international borders.

The UN has approved 17 sustainability targets, to which we at NTNU are committed. A commitment we take most seriously; sustainability will be both a target and a guideline in our overall priorities.

Again, you have now achieved the highest academic degree achievable. And no matter what the subject, the knowledge you have acquired and conveyed to society will make a difference.

Good knowledge alone cannot make a better world. **Savis Gohari** has in her PhD, highlighted the need for political understanding of technology and science.

She argues that our attention should not merely be focused on developing good policies, but also on managerial aspects of organizing strong collaboration between governments, universities, and other stakeholders.

Savis is now a postdoctoral researcher in one of the European Smart City Projects, in which Trondheim is one of the Lighthouses and the NTNU campus is one of the demo projects.

**Trygve Olav Fossum** is also here today. Trygve Olav's research is rooted in ocean observation and monitoring using intelligent robotics.

His work programming an autonomous underwater vehicle, named Harald after the famous Norwegian oceanographer Harald Sverdrup, has helped marine biologists map phytoplankton, which are at the base of the ocean's food web.

He has also worked with Harald the AUV to track the contact between cold Arctic seawater and warmer Atlantic water in the Arctic. This is the kind of key research humankind needs, so we can better understand how climate change is affecting the oceans.

I would have liked to mention each and one of you, but that would take the rest of the day. I therefore let Savis and Trygve Olav represent all the valuable knowledge sitting in this room today.

The Doctoral Degree Awards Ceremony is the final chapter of your education at NTNU, but that does not mean that your ties to NTNU are cut from today. On the contrary: we consider you to be our ambassadors, and an important part of our national and international network.

And above all, you are ambassadors for knowledge. Knowledge deserves the best ambassadors it can get. I trust you to be the best knowledge ambassadors ever!

And I trust you to use your knowledge to make a difference. To make knowledge for a better world.»