



ISSUE #13
Dec. 13, 2021

DEAN'S DIGEST

Looking back and looking forward

"You cannot connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. You have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future"

Steve Jobs

We are approaching the end of 2021. Moving into a new year brings a nice opportunity to look back, as well as look forward. A retrospective look at what we have experienced this year can point towards priorities and tasks for 2022. The first issue of this newsletter came from a newly appointed Dean sitting behind a screen with no sense of the ITU environment, its spirit, and its people. Now, nearly one year later, I am still on an "ITU-culture learning journey" but getting to know you better and beginning to feel as member of the ITU family. I am truly grateful to see how our community has been working hard to make ends meet and keep the ITU wheels rolling as smoothly as possible despite pandemic and political road bumps. I hope that 2022 will bring time for mental and physical recovery, peaceful moments with peers, more energy, and creative moments for continuing the development of ITU.

Connecting the dots of 2021

A new Dean of Education meant setting new strategic directions and expectations. In February, you could read in *Dean's Digest #1* that greater transparency across ITU units was deemed important to ensure good decision-making and collaborative actions regarding teaching and education. I also stated the centrality of wellbeing for a good performance. This was in the middle of the pandemic of online teaching and a social vacuum and survey results and student accounts were ticking in, showing how many were struggling to keep motivated and energized.

A need for a more formalized and focused action was identified so *Dean's Digest #2* addressed this issue and announced strategy for a thriving learning environment. Again, we emphasized the importance of joining forces at ITU and develop shared understanding of what students find to be efficient drivers of a good learning environment to develop efficient practices for strengthening the

students' learning performance. Transparency and wellbeing will be strong strategic focus areas in 2022.

The need for more interdisciplinary teaching and learning through cross-departmental collaboration was raised in *Dean's Digest #3*. It is apparently easier said than done, so despite a common ground on why we should be interdisciplinary, we still work to define "how" as it still is of high priority. In 2022, we must make an extra effort to show our students how to manage collaborations across disciplines to expand their knowledge horizons.

The executive management announced high growth ambitions, so *Dean's Digest #4* underscored ITU's unique value proposition and purpose, namely the shared passion for IT. This suggested that growth in size will not drive us unless we build on the passionate community working for high quality learning. Initiatives to strengthen our social learning environment will also continue in 2022.

In April, we began to hope for an opening of Campus, but this was marked by a high degree of uncertainty, so *Dean's Digest #5* discussed how human stressors of navigating uncertainty and complexity had become part of our work and study life. This can help us develop resilience which is useful at ITU as well as outside ITU. 2022 will likely continue with pandemic waves, which provides us with a useful setting for exploring methods for promoting these skills.

An action point of more female students must expand to the ambition of ensuring equality and inclusion at all levels of ITUs culture and organization. This will require an ongoing effort by the management. *Dean's Digest #6* focused on gender balance and equality in education and pointed towards future actions for strengthening equality and diversity at ITU.

Dean's Digest #7 discussed homogenization of employment tickets to ease the understanding of the ITU skills and attributes of our graduates and ensure a match with the labor market demand. In collaboration with heads of Study programmes we developed "Employability profiles", illustrating our graduates as stand-out candidates for specific job types in a way that strikes the balance between complexity and simplifying details for a quick overview. The profiles will be presented at the employers panel meetings in 2022.

Dean's Digest #8 initiated our work on defining how students engage in research-based activities in different ways at ITU and what the learning outcomes are. The teaching interaction framework illustrate the variety of research-based learning styles and the different levels of teacher-student engagement. In 2022, we continue its implementation to increase students' and faculty's awareness of research-based learning formats.

Dean's Digest #9 introduced the initiation of the Institutional Accreditation of ITU. Quality assurance is the backbone of operation and development of our routines and practices to ensure our students "get value for money" and ITU gets money to create value. After the first round, the panel was happy to see a quality system that fits ITU size, well-functioning employers' panels, a high engagement of people at ITU and the commitment of our Heads of Study Programmes was highlighted. But audit trails will continue in spring 2022 and focus on students' contact with the relevant research environment as well as documentation of how ITU uses feedback from students to ensure the quality and develop the content and organisation of individual study programmes with special regard to teaching, examinations, and workload.

Striking the online-onsite work balance is a theme that appeared in 2021 and will continue in 2022. We do not yet know its potential for increasing our wellbeing

and performance, but this will be part of our individual and cultural learning journey ahead. *Dean's Digest #10* addressed the importance of learning what works best for us as individuals, for our colleagues, students, and ITU in general. Many of us work home one or two days a week now, but there are still challenges of orchestrating online and onsite activities, so we must still find ways to ensure a social work and study environment and individual needs.

ITU has a strong talent infrastructure and has the potential to change how we develop IT talents. This year, we focused on how TAs can be a unique way of fostering digital talents, as teaching others boosts learning. *Dean's Digest #11* had Dan Professor Dan Witzner Hansen, Head of the Study Programme for SWU as guest writer on the importance of fostering talent. In 2022, the BEWISE strategy will guide us to increase student empowerment and engagement and thereby improve the conditions for students to develop their talent within IT.

Many students at ITU struggle with high workload and pressure to constantly deliver at a high pace. When our students are forced to make meaningless prioritizations, such as sacrificing reading and preparing for the lectures to do exercises, it hampers the quality of learning. To increase student voice and fact-base this theme, Viktor Shamal Andersen, the President of the ITU Student Council co-authored *Dean's Digest #12*. In 2022, we collaborate with student Council, SAP, and faculty to find better ways of balancing workloads so wellbeing and performance increase.

It has also been exciting to visit the labs and participate at classes and see the variety of teaching and learning that takes place here at ITU. I have met super-engaged students, lab managers, TAs, and professors. It was also super-fun to serve at Scroll bar at the "code for drinks" event, which really gave me a sense of the ITU vibe.

By connecting the 2021 dots, we discover how many aspects of teaching and learning we have worked with in 2021. In 2022 we will stay on the same path and prioritize our time and effort so we can regain energy and balance.

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