



**ON THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY  
IN SAFEGUARDING DEMOCRACY AND THE  
INDEPENDENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**





In response to increasing threats to democratic processes within the global community, we feel that the university has an obligation to assess its contribution to the vitality of democracy.

**Also at risk is the independence of universities** as sites for critical thinking and autonomous knowledge production, such independence being one of the foundations of democracy. In this context, the relationship between higher education and democracy is critical for the future of society.



# DEMOCRACY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

- A unique research program that promotes a rich and productive dialogue between higher education and decision makers
- Deploys existing research skills in the Humanities and Social Sciences for revitalising democratic processes
- A timely response from within the academy to threats to this cornerstone of the free world



## The research programme is divided into three focus areas

- Democratic processes at the universities
- The universities and their relation to Swedish democratic institutions
- The universities and the global democratisation of nations



# Example research project

## Feminism and democracy

A project that addresses, with Mary Wollstonecraft, the key place of women's access to education as part of the process by which democratic rule is achieved and sustained.

Wollstonecraft was instrumental in the development of a field of enquiry – feminism – that began outside the walls of the university but has transformed it, and in doing so created the aspiration to make it more inclusive, restructured on the principle of gender equality. These developments are almost a century old and have yet to be fully realized.



Ozan Kose, AFP, Getty Images



## Example research project

### Who is running higher education and for whom?

While higher education has become more socially inclusive, some universities have maintained an elite position. This is confirmed by the increased importance of international ranking lists. Many elite universities rely to a large degree on private funding while in the Nordic countries for example universities are mainly publicly funded. With a focus on Europe and the USA, this project aims to investigate the connections between top ranked universities' models of funding, forms of governance and academic performance.



“Where Do You Fall?” Nick Sergeant

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