Largest initiative ever for Sweden’s future research leaders

The Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation has decided to set up a unique career programme for young researchers. WALLENBERG ACADEMY FELLOWS, as it will be called, represents assured long-term resources for the country’s most promising young researchers in all disciplines. The programme will be the Foundation’s largest initiative ever. The plan is to provide funding of SEK 1.2 billion, over five years, for a total of 125 young researchers.

Sweden’s scientific competitiveness is declining. Powerful action is required to ensure that Sweden retains its leading research position in the future. If the country’s best young scientists get the chance to develop into successful research leaders, there is hope for Sweden as a research nation.

‘The future lies in the hands of the next generation of scientists, and the Foundation’s statutes provide for us to work for the benefit of Sweden. What could be more beneficial to this country than to support that next generation?’ asks Peter Wallenberg Jr, Vice Chairman of the Foundation.

Both long-term funding and mentorship

The purpose of the new career programme and the long-term funding is to give the most promising and best young researchers a work situation that enables them to focus on their projects and address difficult, long-term research questions.

‘The long view is a key factor, especially when it comes to basic research,’ says Staffan Normark, Permanent Secretary of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

As part of the initiative the Foundation will, in cooperation with five Swedish learned academies, create a mentor programme to provide support for the researchers’ scientific development and for innovation. This will afford scope to develop the skills and contact networks they will need to head successful research environments.

‘Our best young researchers are important to Sweden as a nation of innovation,’ comments Björn O. Nilsson, President of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences.

Collaboration between the Foundation, academies and universities

The programme has been initiated in close collaboration with Swedish university vice-chancellors, the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA), the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (RSAS), the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (KVHAA) and the Swedish Academy. The universities are to nominate researchers who will be evaluated by the academies, whereupon the Foundation will make the final selection, and the universities will assume long-term responsibility for the selected researchers’ work.

Largest initiative ever

To date, the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation has granted SEK 185 million for a first call for applications in 2011. The plan is that altogether, under the programme, up to 125 young scientists will receive funding up to a potential total of SEK 1.2 billion in 2012–16. They are to be awarded up to SEK 7.5 million each, spread over the five years. They will subsequently be eligible to apply, on a competitive basis, for another five years’ funding.

The first Wallenberg Academy Fellows will be announced in autumn 2012.

Video and more information

www.wallenbergacademyfellows.se

Call for applications: www.wallenbergacademyfellows.se

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The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, founded in 1739, is an independent organization whose overall objective is to promote the sciences and strengthen their influence in society. The Academy takes special responsibility for the natural sciences and mathematics, but endeavours to promote the exchange of ideas between various disciplines.