

## Press release

ETH Day 2015

# "Doing the right things"

Zurich, 21 November 2015

On the 160th anniversary of ETH Zurich, Rector Sarah Springman described how she wants to provide students with the tools they need for their future careers in a rapidly changing professional world. In her address, Mayor Corine Mauch emphasised how important open-mindedness is for the future of ETH and for the city of Zurich.

"We need to be doing things right, but most of all we need to be doing the right things. Only then can we ensure the success of our university in a rapidly changing society," said ETH Rector Sarah Springman in her speech on this year's ETH Day. The Rector took stock of her first year in office and highlighted how she wants to educate the students so they can later have an impact as highly qualified professionals in the economy and society.

At an institution like ETH, it is not just about expanding the students' knowledge in their field of expertise. "We have to promote skills such as mental agility and independent thinking," she stressed. Young people should be taught values such as entrepreneurial thinking and leadership skills, as well as socially and environmentally responsible action.

### **Adapting learning goals to rapid developments**

The future is uncertain, and nobody can predict in what sort of an environment ETH graduates will work 40 years from now. For teaching, this means finding the right mix of learning opportunities, and adapting learning objectives to new realities. With today's flood of information and its rapid dissemination, should knowledge be taught more broadly or more profoundly; and what importance should be given to online or project-based learning?

The ETH Rector finished by speaking about two developments that are of concern to her: the looming isolation of Switzerland in Europe and the federal government's impending austerity programmes. "Education and research were always regarded in Switzerland as an investment in the future. We very much hope that the public sector will continue to invest wisely," she said.

### **Sustainable connection**

Zurich Mayor and ETH alumna Corine Mauch used her address to highlight how the city and ETH Zurich have developed together historically. She referred to the connection between the city and the university and emphasised its importance for Zurich: "The city and ETH belong together, and this connection is rewarding, successful and sustainable," says Mauch.

Even today, the city of Zurich and ETH are developing in parallel. As an example, Mauch referred to the implementation of Zurich's central university district master plan. The developments coming out of the Hönggerberg campus are also important impulses for the city and urban life. Zurich is thus a fresh and extremely international city, not least because of the appeal of ETH. "Zurich has become a successful city because it continues to offer people from all over Switzerland and the entire world a new home," said the Mayor. Zurich will have a bright future if the city remains open for people from all around the world.

### **Three new honorary doctors, two new honorary councillors**

Three researchers (two female, one male) received honorary ETH Zurich doctorates on this special day for their outstanding achievements in science and teaching. Mark Felton Randolph, Professor of Civil Engineering and Fugro Chair in Geotechnics at the University of Western Australia in Perth, has made crucial contributions to the field of offshore geotechnics and has developed novel methods for offshore site investigation techniques. The ETH also awarded an honorary doctorate to Frances Hamilton Arnold, Dickson Professor at the California Institute of Technology, for her pioneering research in the field of the directed evolution of proteins. In order to create new proteins for use in medicine, for example, she developed a new approach which reproduces Darwin's theory of evolution in the laboratory. The third honorary doctorate went to Mildred Dresselhaus, Professor of Electrical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is known internationally as the "Queen of Carbon", thanks to her pioneering contributions in the study of carbon structures. She was analyzing graphite using optical spectroscopy as early as the 1960s.

Jürgen Dormann and Hansjörg Wyss were appointed as honorary councillors for their exceptional personal commitment to the promotion of teaching and research, as well as the transfer of research and technology at ETH Zurich. Jürgen Dormann was CEO and a member of the board of directors at well-known companies such as ABB, Adecco and Sulzer. Since 2008 he has been heading the ETH Zurich Foundation as honorary President of the Board of Trustees; he has significantly advanced the Foundation's financial development and further established the tradition of university funding with private financing. An extraordinary donation from Hansjörg Wyss, a successful entrepreneur and ETH alumnus, made the foundation of the Wyss Translational Center possible. The new research centre at the University of Zurich and ETH is at the interface of medicine, science and engineering.

### **Golden owl for dedicated lecturers**

The best teachers are traditionally presented with awards at ETH Day. The Student Association at ETH (VSETH) gave the Golden Owl for particularly dedicated and excellent teaching to one lecturer per department. This year's Credit Suisse Award for Best Teaching went to Professor David J. Norris from the Department of Mechanical and Process Engineering.

At ETH Day, three young talents from the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences also provided an insight into their current work. They presented a prototype for a portable water filter, a new therapeutic approach to treat gluten intolerance, and the "apoc – advanced problems in organic chemistry" smartphone app, which will serve as a learning environment for students at the ETH and around the world.

### **Roman Boutellier honoured**

In his closing speech, ETH President Lino Guzzella paid tribute to the achievements of Roman Boutellier, who will retire from his position as Vice President for Human Resources and Infrastructure at the end of the year. For more than seven years, Roman Boutellier was in charge of construction, renovation and operation of the ETH's buildings and was responsible for staff as well as the ETH library and IT. He performed excellently in all of these areas, said Guzzella. The ETH President also took the opportunity to express his pride in the university: "I may be a little biased in this regard, but I am convinced that the ETH is a Swiss success story that radiates throughout the entire world," he said.

The texts of all the speeches, profiles of this year's honorary doctors and honorary councillors, and a list of all the prize winners can be found at: [www.eth-tag.ethz.ch](http://www.eth-tag.ethz.ch) →

### **Further information**

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