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Pioneers celebrated in Helix Lab

The first Helix Lab fellows are almost done with their graduate studies. Several fellows have handed in their master's thesis, and others have their deadline approaching. Collaborators, including executives and supervisors from industry and universities, were invited to an event where the fellows presented their research results and shared their experiences as the first Helix Lab Fellows ever.

Strong vision

Anette Birck, Director of Helix Lab, welcomed and shared the overall vision for the educational initiative in Kalundborg, where Helix Lab is an important step:

"In 2030, Kalundborg will be an international leading cluster for biomanufacturing and industrial sustainability, education, research and innovation".

The model is right

Chairman of the Helix Lab Board of Directors, Professor at DTU, Krist Gernaey was the next presenter and began with a review of the rapid development of Helix Lab and the great accomplishments of the collaboration so far. He praised both the employees of Helix Lab and the quality and relevance of the projects. And then he praised the first fellows for being pioneers:

"Together we have shown that the model is right. We are all very proud of this first group of fellows in Helix Lab, and what we have achieved together," he concluded.

Very motivating

Before the students presented their results at a gallery walk, there was

also a presentation from two supervisors, one from industry and one from a university.

Andreas Schack Fabricius, Digital Architect at Novozymes and supervisor of a Helix Lab fellow, emphasized in particular the opportunities offered by the collaboration with the students: "The role as supervisor of Helix Lab fellows is very rewarding. It's a role I take very seriously. I'm proud when I see the results my student has achieved. Furthermore, it is the opportunity - with the facilities that Helix Lab has - to experiment, innovate and maybe even 'disrupt'. It is very motivating".

Collaboration and networking

Simon Gregersen Echers, Assistant Professor at the Department of Chemistry and Life Sciences at Aalborg University, and academic supervisor for two Helix Lab fellow, highlighted in particular the opportunities for collaboration and networking:

"Helix Lab is an important stepping stone for even more collaboration and for even more cross-cutting innovation. The networking opportunity in Helix Lab has been unique. When we as a university collaborate with industry in Kalundborg, we get the opportunity to test the industrial relevance of our research. We get the opportunity to go from milliliters in our laboratories to tons in the industry. All parties win: Companies gain access to research skills, new ideas and innovation. The students get the opportunity to work with applied research and gain valuable insight into the industry".

Bridge building between industry and universities

Finally, there was a presentation by Senior Scientific Manager, Jeremy Danielfrom Novo Nordisk Foundation, who together with Novo Nordisk A/S and Novozymes are behind the funding of the Helix Lab initiative. He took a look back at the development of the Helix Lab initiative, which started in 2019 and now culminates with the first fellows presenting their research results.

"This research and education initiative was developed with a lot of stakeholders. Many with very different perspectives. Early in this process, I quickly began to understand the strength of the Kalundborg collaboration model. This initiative is really a story of collaboration. We all had one shared vision: to develop an initiative that could help bridge collaboration between academia and industry in Kalundborg

and, in this way, attract new students and opportunities to innovate sustainable solutions for the local industry. "

Jobs in the industry

After the speeches, Anette Birck handed out the diplomas to applause from those present, and then it was time for the fellows to present their results, learning and experiences while they have been in Kalundborg. Incidentally, several could tell that they had already gotten jobs in the local industry.

Fellow, Katrine Esmann Pedersen, from SDU, says:

"My supervisor at the university suggested that I write a thesis as a Helix Lab Fellow, and it has really given me the opportunity to get close to the companies and experience how to work as an engineer. I have taken samples at the production, and I have carried out all my experiments in the new laboratories at Helix Lab. I could not wait to use equipment that we did not have available at the university, and I have, among other things, used an oCelloScope in the Helix Lab to analyze crystals as part of my thesis".

Katrine has just accepted a job at Novo Nordisk in Kalundborg and is looking forward to experiencing how to work in the company itself, so she gets a sense of engineering life, and not least how to work at a large scale in the industry.

Moves to Kalundborg from Aalborg

Helix Lab Fellow Jacob Lund Jensen, like Katrine, has been offered a job in Kalundborg, and with three great offers on hand, the choice has now fallen on Novo Nordisk.

Jacob therefore moves from Aalborg to Kalundborg with his girlfriend and has just bought a house in the city:

"I have lived in Aalborg all my life, but I really like the atmosphere here in Kalundborg, where there is a calm environment and you are close to water, forest and nature."

"It has been a really great opportunity to be a Helix Lab Fellow here in Kalundborg. I have had a special collaboration with Unibio, and our supervisor here has been really good at getting us fellows incorporated into the company along the way. At the same time, it has

been great to be able to experiment on a pilot scale in the Helix Lab itself, as it makes the scalability of our project more realistic, both process-wise and financially, than what would have been possible on the university's laboratory scale ".

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