

SPEECH HØGSKOLEN 2026

Dear students, dear everyone, congratulations. This is your day to celebrate, and to celebrate it with you, I have tried to prepare some words, some reflections on what Høgskolen i Molde, and by that, you people sitting here today, means to me, as an author, which is my profession, and as a citizen of Molde. To explain this to you I need to take you on a small detour to Trøndelag and Trondheim, but don't worry, we will return back here, to Molde very soon,:

As a TRUE Moldenser, I can't wholeheartedly say that I am immensely proud of this institution. Why? It brings the world to Molde. It brings knowledge to this city. And these are not just empty words.

Whether you grew up a few hundred metres up the hill in Moldelia, or on the other side of the globe, every one of you gathered here today has helped and is helping Molde to become a larger city, a better city, and a wiser city.

This university college is the academic heart of our community. It is a heart that beats with curiosity, discovery, and learning.

Some of you will stay here in the area and put your skills to work here. And some of you will leave. And for those of you who are now completing your studies and preparing to leave Molde, our consolation is this: the knowledge you have acquired here, the research you have conducted, the ideas you have developed—The wider world will benefit from them in the years ahead.

So now: Let's take a short trip from Molde to Trondheim:

Before Kjetil Knutsen and Bodø/Glimt captivated European football, there was Rosenborg—Molde's great football rival, though let us forget that for a

moment. For many years, Rosenborg was not only Norway's finest football club but one of the most successful clubs in Scandinavia.

They broke new ground and pushed beyond what anyone thought possible for a Norwegian team competing in Europe.

Rosenborg was led by the legendary Nils Arne Eggen: the chain smoking Godfather from Orkdal., He was a teacher, a strategist, a manager, and an *absolute* legend, one of the wisest public figures Norway has produced. His wisdom extended far beyond the pitch.

He was also famously quick-witted.

At the height of Rosenborg's success, a team made up almost entirely of local players achieved victories over some of Europe's wealthiest clubs. The pinnacle came when they defeated Real Madrid at Lerkendal Stadium.

After the match, Eggen delivered one of the most memorable lines in Norwegian sporting history:

"I'll give them this—Real Madrid, at least they tried"

When asked later in life why he had become so wise, Eggen answered without hesitation:

"Everything I know, I learned from others."

That simple statement perfectly captures the philosophy that defined both his life and his leadership. It became the foundation of what he called *The Good Foot Theory*—a philosophy built on recognizing the strengths of others,

sharing knowledge generously, and helping people become the best versions of themselves.

It is a culture of sharing. A culture of generosity. A culture of seeing and valuing one another. A culture of gaining new knowledge, throughout life.

These principles reach far beyond the football field.

Eggen believed in seeing the whole person. Against all odds, he built a football team that competed successfully at the highest international level despite possessing only a fraction of the financial resources available to its competitors.

The philosophy of recognizing others and sharing knowledge brings me from Nils Arne Eggen back to Molde—and to a man who embodied many of the same qualities.

Just over six months ago, at the end of November last year, Professor Arild Hervik passed away, at the age of 76..

For those of you who did not know him (though i reckon many of you, do), Arild Hervik worked at this institution from 1980, when it was still known as Distriktshøgskolen. From 1996 onwards, for more than two decades, he served as professor here.

Yet what struck me most about Arild Hervik was not his titles, his achievements, or the distinction of his academic career.

It was the way he chose to live after he was forced into semi-retirement. Confronted by a devastating muscular disease. During the final years of his life, he gradually lost almost all physical mobility. Confined to a room at

Glomstua Nursing Home, dependent on care around the clock, he communicated primarily through assistive technology. Even the smallest journey required careful planning.

Many people would have seen such circumstances as the closing of a life.

Arild Hervik saw them as the opening of another chapter.

Where one world ended, another began.

With his intellect, his curiosity, and his extraordinary openness to learning, he continued to explore new ideas, new disciplines, and new perspectives. He used his knowledge not merely to advance his own field, but to illuminate the importance of others.

I only got to know him personally after he became ill, yet he taught me lessons I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

I often think about Arild and ask myself what any of us would do if faced with such adversity.

What made him remarkable was not simply that he endured it.

It was the way he transformed it.

His intellectual curiosity remained extraordinary. His desire to learn did not fade. Quite the opposite. It was like his intellect grew him invisible muscles that carried onto new ground, new intellectual adventures.

Even in his final years, he continued to draw attention to subjects and conversations that might otherwise have been overlooked.

For most of us, a ferry trip to the island of Sekken is a short and uncomplicated journey.

For Arild Hervik, it was an immense undertaking.

Yet every year, until the very end, he made that journey in order to attend and host the annual seminar known as *The Hervik Lecture*. There, on Sekken, at the home of Mette and Øystein Eik, he gathered people from different backgrounds to discuss important questions and exchange ideas.

He prepared for it meticulously.

He looked forward to it every year.

To me, Arild Hervik became a symbol of hope.

From a small room in a nursing home, in a small town on the Norwegian coast, a man who could barely move physically managed to inspire so much enthusiasm, curiosity, and intellectual energy. He saw far beyond the walls around him. Far beyond the limits imposed by illness.

I can only imagine the impact he had on this institution throughout its history.

In Norway, we would call him a *bauta*—a standing stone. A figure of enduring significance.

Yet what makes his story extraordinary is that even when formal retirement arrived, he never stopped teaching. He never stopped learning. He never stopped encouraging others to think more deeply.

I never had the privilege of studying at this institution.

But I take comfort in knowing that Arild Hervik taught me anyway.

Now, this is not meant to be a melancholy reflection on the life of a beloved professor. Today is about you.

It is about the future.

It is about the future you will help shape through the knowledge you have gained here, through the disciplines you have devoted yourselves to, and through the work you will carry into the world beyond this hall.

And perhaps no one understood that better than Arild Hervik.

He was never a man who looked backwards.

He looked forward.

And today, I would like us to do the same.

Because the best antidote to ignorance, cynicism, and the growing distrust of reason in our age is precisely what has brought us together here today:

Knowledge.

Understanding.

Insight.

These are the tools you have spent years developing. They will enable you not only to understand the world, but to interpret it, improve it, and help shape what it becomes.

Not through blind ambition.

Not through vanity.

But through what you have learned—and what you will continue to learn.

It begins again.

Arild Hervik loved poetry.

I find that wonderful.

A distinguished economist. A master of statistics and numbers. Yet at the same time deeply devoted to poetry—the written word, open to interpretation, capable of expressing truths that numbers alone cannot capture.

He had many favourite poems.

If I were to read all of them, we would not leave this hall before midnight.

So I will spare you that.

But as I have been reading through the poems he loved most, I found one that seemed particularly fitting for this occasion.

And so, as we conclude this graduation ceremony, I would like to share it with you. The poem also brings us back to Nils Arne Eggen, who also had this

particular poem as one of his favourites, and it appears in Eggen's And the poem appears in the anthology of his favourite poems. In the original it is called Stemmeseddel, and I have translated it here with the title Ballo, as in a voting ballot, and it is written by the famous Norwegian poet Harald Sverdrup:

Ballot

Vote for the sea,
vote for the wind that steers the waves and shapes the clouds,
vote for the ocean's plankton and the whale's love songs,
vote for cod, herring, saithe, and capelin.

Vote for the bedrock, vote for the smooth coastal rocks
and contemplative vistas,
vote for the groundwater and the moss's gentle beating on stone,
vote for deep valleys sounding like trumpets
of barley and wheat,
vote for globeflowers, yew trees, rutabagas, and potatoes.

Vote for the forest, vote for ponds with perch and whitefish,
vote for the North Cape, Son, and Melsomvik.

Vote for cities with trees around every house
and sunflowers growing in the roadways,
vote for slow cars with flower boxes on their roofs,
red clover and dandelions in their wheels
and sunshine in their headlights.

Vote for the road worker's parchment face,
deepened by hieroglyphs,
vote for his arms of woodcarving in sun-scorched acanthus.

Vote for the mason's tightrope walk, stone upon stone,
vote for the hammer driving home its arguments

for a future of ordinary days, Sundays of love,
children and circuses.

Vote for the farmer's stubborn sea, darkly seething
with manure and earthworms, wave upon wave
behind the tractor.

Vote for the Sámi, the Kven, the women,
vote for Flower-Ole, Meadow-Marie, Apple-Anton,
Guri Fairgoose and Vidar Waterman.

Vote for those who will live here a hundred years from now,
vote for your grandson's cry,
vote for your granddaughter's first smile.

Vote for those who will never rest
until the world becomes one mouthful more peaceful.

Vote for the firefighters who try, with a sigh,
to put out hell.