Umeå is indeed the “City of the Birches”, but for researchers it is also the city of the spruces, the pines and the aspens. The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in Umeå is the centre for forest research in the country. The city is one of SLU’s four principal locations and the home of the Faculty of Forest Sciences. It is here that the bulk of the Faculty’s research and education takes place.

The Faculty carries out research in areas such as forest management, forest maintenance, forest biotechnology, forest ecology and the environment, forest economics, recreation and health, wildlife and fish, and also the use and management of Sweden’s mountain environment. What we should do with the forest is an urgent topical issue. Is it for boiling, sawing, burning, distilling, or just for walking?

In conjunction with Umeå University, SLU has one of Europe’s most prominent environments for experimental plant research. This is the Umeå Plant Science Centre, which is the product of SLU’s own investment in excellence, which safeguards its own top intellectual forces. At the Centre, which was voted in 2004 as offering the best work environment for young researchers in the biosciences outside the USA, there are close to 200 people of more than 30 nationalities. Also, the Berzelii Centre in Forest Biotechnology, one of the largest assemblies of research established in Sweden in recent decades, started operations here in 2007.

There are hopes in the slightly longer term of being able to tailor wood fibres to different areas of application, and perhaps also to adapt trees to climate changes. The mission of the Berzelii Centre is for pioneering, basic international research to be linked to the development of future products and processes in forestry and agriculture.

The two universities share a campus, and collaboration between them is well-developed. The Centre for Research in the Environmental Sciences and Miljöhögskolan, the Environment University College, which provide a portal for environment-related education in Umeå, are examples of this. There is also proximity to industry and commerce. There are many business undertakings specialising in forest technology in the city and in the southern part of the county of Västerbotten.

One of the Faculty of Forest Sciences’ two vocational and bachelor-degree programmes at basic level, the Forester Programme, is initiated in Umeå. For anyone who wants to work in forestry and with the environment and natural resources, either in Sweden or abroad, this is the right programme to choose. In parallel, about 80 single-subject courses are offered at SLU Umeå, and two Master’s programmes, namely the Management of Fish and Wildlife Populations, and Plant and Forest Biotechnology. The Faculty’s other vocational and bachelor-degree foundation programme, which gives a diploma in forest management, is provided in Skinnskatteberg.

The Faculty also offers both education and graduate research at two of SLU’s other principal locations, Uppsala and Alnarp. In Vindeln, sixty kilometres from Umeå, there is a forestry-research station, and also many parks for experimentation. There are a further six experimental parks around the country. Also, many hundreds of specific forest-related trials are being performed in other places in Sweden.

The Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, based at SLU Uppsala, also conducts research in Umeå. As well as performing practical experiments with biofuels, it runs
a department of agricultural sciences, focusing specifically on northern Sweden, at Röbäcksdalen on the outskirts of Umeå. It has a modern cowshed with space for 120 milch cows and young animals.

SLU leads and coordinates research in a couple of important national centres, namely the Umeå Centre for Tropical Research and the Centre for Wildlife and Fish.

By virtue of SLU’s Government-commissioned task to pursue environmental monitoring and assessment, there is also a strong link to Sweden’s national environmental goals and to the country’s commitments in the setting of international environmental collaboration. Two major environmental assessment programs, the National Forest Inventory and the National Inventory of the Landscape in Sweden (NILS), are run from SLU Umeå. The forest inventories, in conjunction with the experimental parks, now also provide forecasts of the availability of blueberries and lingonberries.

Uminova Innovation and SweTree Technologies AB assist our researchers when good research ideas are to be commercialised, and possibly come to be hived to a business undertaking.

The Forest Library operates as a learning centre for our students. The Library’s website enables anyone who is interested to search through a large picture archive, containing photographs of all kinds with a forest or forestry connection.

Umeå was appointed as Sweden’s Student Town of the Year in 2006. The campus has northern Scandinavia’s largest exercise facility, where students can keep in trim through aerobics, weight training, floorball, climbing, swimming, or beach volleyball. There is also a new artificial football pitch for all-year use.

Umeå’s airport is located just a few kilometres from the city centre. Flying to Arlanda, Stockholm’s main airport, takes about an hour. The Botniabanan, the southern rail route, is currently under construction, which will speed up journeys from the south within a few years.

Educational programmes at SLU Umeå
MSc in Forestry

SLU Umeå
730 | students, of which 130 are PhD students
450 | employees

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