
CU marks the 666th anniversary of its founding

Charles University in Prague today marked the 666th anniversary of its founding. On the occasion of the celebration of this anniversary, University Rector Professor Tomáš Zima bestowed the Miloslav Petrušek Prize for Presentation of the University and the Bedřich Hrozný Prize for Creative Accomplishment. These were awarded to teams from the CU Faculty of Social Sciences, the CU Faculty of Medicine in Plzeň and the CU Faculty of Mathematics and Physics.

Celebrations, which take place on 7 April every year, include a ceremonial assembly in the Grand Aula of the historic Carolinum building, and this year included lectures by University Rector, Professor Tomáš Zima, and Professor Jiří Kuthan from the Catholic Faculty of Theology. The ceremonial assembly was also attended by the Lord Mayor of the City of Prague, RNDr. Tomáš Hudeček, Ph.D.

In his speech the Rector recalled the historical significance of Charles University for the education of society at the time and the major role played by the University in the modern education process. He stated that this was a process involved not only education and scientific work, but also the so-called third role of the University, on which greater emphasis should be placed:

"I understand this role as being that of the university's relationship to society in the broadest sense of the word, that is, the preservation of the university as a public corporation and an institution that makes a substantial contribution to major societal processes. A university is, and must be, a forum for free plurality and the exchange of opinions, a place for critical, open discussion and the bearer of positive intellectual trends, while primarily emphasising the fostering and guaranteeing of ethical standards," said the Rector, Professor Tomáš Zima.

In his lecture, Professor Jiří Kuthan focussed on the major milestones that have marked the history of Charles University in Prague from its founding up to the present day. He emphasised that Charles University could not and cannot, either in the past or today, think only of itself; Responsibility for directing society and the country along the right path has always been particular to the university community, even in difficult times, and for this it often paid a high price – and this continues to apply, with no less urgency, today.

The Miloslav Petrušek Prize for the successful presentation of Charles University was bestowed by the Rector on a group of students led by PhDr. Denisa Kasl Kollmannová, Ph.D., from the Institute for Communication Studies and Journalism of the Faculty of Social Science. The prize was awarded for the group's '*Změna paradigmatu: Kouření v restauracích lidem vadí*' ('Changing the paradigm: people do not like smoking in restaurants') campaign. The group prepared, in cooperation with the Ipsos research organisation, a survey on the subject of smoking in restaurants, which they were subsequently successful in presenting in the Czech media and on the Internet.

The Miroslav Petrušek Prize for the Presentation of Charles University is awarded for achievements that have a major effect on the creation of a positive image of CU to the broader public. The prize can be awarded to individuals or groups irrespective of whether they belong to the academic community of the University or not. The winner receives a financial sum.

The Bedřich Hrozný Prize for Creative Accomplishment was awarded to a group from the CU Faculty of Medicine in Plzeň for its discovery of an innovative means of determining the coagulability of blood in out-of-body circulation machines and dialysis and the related patenting of the method and equipment for its realisation. The second winner was a group from the CU Faculty of Mathematics and Physics for discoveries in the newly-created field of opto-spintronics (a branch of electronics that uses magnetic momentum – spin – of charge carriers for the storing and processing of data), which have been published in several prestigious international journals.

The Bedřich Hrozný Prize for Creative Accomplishment is awarded on an annual basis for major and original creative accomplishment, e.g. for specialist publication in journals or books, works of art, the organisation of exhibitions or realised patents. The chief criteria for the granting of the prize are the originality, quality and importance of the creative accomplishment. A financial sum is awarded together with the prize.

The ceremonial assembly concluded with some pieces by Bedřich Smetana, the father of modern Czech music; this year we also mark the 190th anniversary of his birth and the 130th anniversary of his death.

Press and PR Office

Charles University in Prague