
New rector Prof. Tomáš Zima swears oath of office

Key, ring, seal, mace and chain: these are the insignia formally accepted by the new Rector of Charles University, Professor Tomáš Zima, on 4 March. During the inauguration, which took place in the Grand Aula of the Carolinum, the former Rector, Professor Václav Hampl, also said farewell to the management of our alma mater. Amongst the many VIPs present was also President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman.

The President expressed his best wishes to Professor Zima not only on his election as Rector of the university, but also to the position of chairman of the Czech Conference of Rectors. He also continued the historic traditions of inauguration and presented the new Rector with a quill pen with a golden holder, inkpot and bible. In his speech the President stated that the new Rector of Charles University was, for him, a guarantor of fruitful cooperation with the academic community, where the substance of this cooperation should be a knowledge-based society in which information is the most important factor on social development. "The dispute about the nomination of university professors is of infinitely lesser importance than the development of a knowledge-based society," said the President, returning to the issue of the appointment of professors.

The new Rector was officially introduced by the chairman of the CU Academic Senate, PhDr. Tomáš Nigrin, Ph.D. The representative of the University's highest administrative body recounted the rectorial election in October and acquainted those present with the professional activities of Professor Zima. He further noted that the newly-elected Rector was a person who united the qualities of both a top manager and scientist; and it was precisely managerial qualifications, in the words of Nigrin, that were becoming increasingly necessary to perform this function. "Every one of us – scientists, pedagogues, students – can only perform to our best ability when they have good facilities and conditions for work within a well-functioning institution. Even Charles University in Prague cannot live on tradition alone," said Nigrin.

In his inauguration speech the new Rector continued in the tradition of professional talks and gave a presentation on his field, medical and clinical biochemistry. "The diagnosis of acute myocardial infarctions, diabetes, metabolic disorders of the lipids, or the joyful awaiting of the birth of a child, are all founded on laboratory studies," said the new Rector, explaining the significance of his professional focus, also stating that laboratory tests affect 70-80 % of medical decisions. Laboratory diagnostics is also starting a new trend in modern medicine – its personalisation. Knowledge of the genetic and biochemical individuality of patients represents an opportunity for doctors to optimise healthcare.

Clinical biochemistry and laboratory diagnostics ought to focus on the most precise description possible of imbalances and regulation disorders. "In relation to this I would say, with slight exaggeration, that I shall endeavour to do something similar as the Rector of Charles University; I am also interested in harmonising the relations within our society and the good of our university, both in itself and within society, of which it is an integral part," emphasised Rector Zima.

Outgoing Rector Václav Hampl gave his closing report on the two four-year periods he spent at the head of the academic community. In awarding commemorative medals he recognised members of the academic community for their services to the development of the university and its faculties. Professor Hampl's overall review was devoted to the growth in the scientific output of Charles University and the positive trends such as the younger age profile and growth in the number of students from abroad. Rector Hampl stated that: "I was required to devote considerable time and energy to the resolution of the issue of how, with more or less stagnating level of direct state support, to maintain research and teaching operations at the university. When I assumed the office of Rector in 2006, more than half of Charles University's budget came from state education grants. By last year, this proportion had decreased to 27 %. Despite this, we have been able over the course of these eight years to increase the University's budget by a third up to its current 9 billion crowns. We were able to achieve this thanks to the implementation of performance and qualitative parameters into the algorithm of public financing for basic research, and also thanks to the massive development of project activities of faculties and institutions of Charles University."

The Emeritus Rector thanked all members of the academic community for their assistance and support and expressed his wish for the university to continue to flourish under his successor.

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