
The Inauguration of Rector Prof. MUDr. Tomáš Zima, DrSc., MBA

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On the 4th of March, 2014, Charles University of Prague and a number of other academic and personal supporters gathered in a farewell to former rector, Prof. RNDr. Václav Hampel, DrSc. and in celebration of our new Rector, Prof. MUDr. Tomáš Zima, DrSc., MBA. Steeped in historical tradition and ceremony, the inauguration was highly successful in celebrating these two men and the institution they devote themselves to. I personally walked away with a proud sense of our flourishing institution's academic integrity and commitment, even as a temporary member of this inspiring community.

The ceremony was conducted in the medieval birthplace of Charles University, in the Aula Magna of the Carolinum which dazzles with its exalting windows, arching doorways, antique organ, tapestries and more. Its features serve not only beauty however, as they relate the history and meaning of the institution that Professor Zima is assuming responsibility for. So too do the symbols of the university which, ceremonially handed over to Professor Zima, also reflect continuation, growth and power over the future; the seal depicts Charles IV kneeling before St. Wenceslaus and encourages the humbleness of the new Rector, the sceptre renders Zima the messenger of education and freedom, the chain reminds us of the Good Shepard, the ring symbolises Zima's new role as the faithful 'husband' and finally, the key allows Zima to open up the future and proceed in his role.

Before we address our new Rector however, it is only right that respect is paid to Professor Hampel, who was elected twice and has served the university for eight years. In his speech Hampel discussed the successes under his leaderships, such as the university's 33% contribution to research in the Czech Republic, the increase of financing, students and support, the 190 interuniversity co-operations, the bounteous participation in the Erasmus programme, the prevention of privatisation and the conservation of Charles University as a public authority. Nevertheless, Hampel stated that it has not been easy and brought his speech to a close by acknowledging all the people who have supported and worked hard for these triumphs.

Returning to the present however, we can take a closer look at Hampel's successor, Tomáš Zima. Zima, who has studied at the 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University and Prague International Business School, was entitled a Professor in 2001, the Dean of the 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in 2005, the Vice-Dean for External Affairs in the same faculty in 2012 and finally the Rector of the university on January 21, 2014. His CV, which can be found on the Charles University website, is prolific in achievements and assures us of his commitment to education and ongoing accomplishment. For his speech of acceptance and thanks, Zima chose his favoured topic of medical and clinical biochemistry and used it as a metaphor for his intentions. He spoke of the beneficial role of biochemistry research to humankind through diagnosis and therapy and expressed his wish, 'to do something similar as the Rector of Charles University...harmonising the relations within our society and in the good of our university'.

However, Zima was not the only star of the inauguration as President Miloš Zeman arrived fashionably late due to a tight schedule. Zeman paid his respects and spoke of his vision of a knowledgeable and reverent society. With the live television cameras in his audience, he also took the opportunity to speak about the Presidential appointment of Professors which only 4 out of 28 governments in the EU do and his opinion to this practice, and finally stated his commitment to both economics and education.

To summarise, the inauguration was a grand event and succeeded in honouring the Rector, old and new, and the integrity of the institution they represent. The traditions were beautifully symbolic and powerful and luckily for a hungry student, the buffet which followed was delicious.