

Dear Spectabiles, Deans,
Dear Chair of the STU Academic Senate,
Honorabiles, Vice-Rectors,
Dear students and Venerabilis Civitatis Academica,

I found in the archives that, after Jur Hronec - the first Rector of the Slovak University of Technology, and Anton Bugan - the first duly elected Rector, I am the 20th Rector of the Slovak University of Technology. A brief insight into their biographies and their imprint on our Alma Mater entitle me to declare that I feel obliged to fasten on all their positive deeds. I feel deep respect and admiration over many wise decisions of the past, and I realize that many of my predecessors had only a very limited field of activity, whether owing to the related political situation or the available personnel and finances. Let me assure you that today I am fully aware of the entrusted responsibility to both, the STU academic community as well as the entire academic community of Slovakia.

Allow me to take a brief excursion into history. In the 18th century, the growing impact of bourgeoisie prompted transformation of the medieval university into a modern flexible institution typical for the abandonment of scholasticism and the onset of experimentation and study of phenomena, as we know it today. It was marked by the establishment of Humboldtian model of education, a tough struggle for transition from the so-called "sleeping universities" towards reorganized education in the spirit of neo-humanism. The Humboldtian education ideal or just Humboldt's Ideal, a concept of academic education where funds for education, research and development are allotted by state, while the administration and distribution of the funds are the exclusive competence of university, is still topical.

This principle is considered as one of the most important academic freedoms. After the World War II, another important principle was introduced in the free part of Europe: competition for the funds allotted to university education and research. After 1989, in order to integrate into the modern Europe of the 21st century, we in Slovakia also had to adapt to this situation. However, no government so far has been able to comply with the promised annual increase in funding to universities; unfortunately, it rather was vice-versa. Another negative side-effect in the development of higher education after 1945 was the growing state administration, trying to permanently restrict the old, proven academic freedoms, while fundamentally increasing political control over higher education. In the years of the former regime, the control had catastrophic consequences, especially in the sphere of university staff, which was due to the continual emigration of our intelligence.

Dear academic community,

I intend to restore the original meaning of “university”: we are *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, a community of teachers and students, whose elements must find their way to each other through dialogue and discussion, while involving the best students in the processes of education and research, thus forming the teams able to compete in the international labour division.

The election program I submitted when applying for the highest university position was built upon three pillars - tradition, modern administration of the institution and strong international ties.

It is necessary to constantly refer to our roots, i.e. the first technical university institution in the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy, whose heritage we now broadly share with the Hungarians and Austrians. During its existence, the STU has educated more than 180,000 engineers who have decisively changed the original agrarian character of Slovakia to its current state.

After streamlining administration and optimizing management processes, I want to listen to the calls and proposals from parts of this University. In Ancient Greece, cybernetics originally referred to the art of piloting and safely navigating a ship on the high seas into port. I studied Cybernetics. To transform STU to a modern European institution, we immediately need to start the reforms that will bring us closer to our role models in the European Union. In addition, it is necessary to keep abreast with the current trends - Race to Zero, Green University/Green Faculty, New European Bauhaus, Industry 4.0, Cyber Security, Paperless University/Faculty, and many others, of course.

In today's world, university must seize the opportunities provided by the common European Research Area, as well as the world leaders overseas and in Asia. We must try to attract foreign students on the basis of our results in science and research, and immediately expand the selection procedures for filling the positions of associate professors and professors to the nearest abroad. Crucial in the future must be our involvement in creating the common European Research Area - our participation in international projects - especially in such institutes as HORIZON EUROPE, KIC EIT, ESA, where funds are accumulated in unprecedented amounts. Unless our teachers, researchers and students travel and the windows of our laboratories are lit late into the night, unless English is spoken in the corridors, lecture rooms and classrooms of our Alma Mater and we are wanted by the postdoctoral students from the countries of high economic development, the discussion on rating and ranking of this University among the top five in the world is completely out of question. The path towards international recognition leads only through quality and efficiency. Individual workplaces - faculties - must move from competitive struggles towards cooperation, in order to achieve the best results in science and research. My ambition is to elevate this intention to our common and key objective. In the future, every student and employee of the University should straightforwardly identify with their Alma Mater - their University, be proud of being its part and develop the feeling of ownership, regardless the field of study, study programme or workplace. It is the only way towards obtaining complementary funding in the relatively near future if the state coffers are unable to guarantee our solid further development in terms of the aforementioned Humboldtian Model.

And finally: there are our reliable and successful partners in our immediate vicinity. In close cooperation with them, we must also create job opportunities in this region for our successful

graduates, just like our colleagues in Austria and the Czech Republic did decades ago. Bratislava desperately deserves a modern international scientific base; otherwise, our brain-drain abroad will have far-reaching consequences for the whole society.

Well, let us start the new academic year 2021-2022 with optimism and a smile, the attributes typical for the youth, our students. One has to fight hard to win. Fortunately, in this struggle, we cannot rest on our laurels, since there are a few of them so far...

Let me wish the entire academic community of the Slovak University of Technology strong health and many personal and professional achievements.

Vivat, crescat et floreat Academia, the Slovak University of Technology.