

# Martin Procházka, MD, PhD

UP grade UP vol. 2

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## I. Who I am and why I want to continue to be the Rector of Palacký University

I am a physician, teacher, and scientist by profession, and I have been a member of the academic community of Palacký University in Olomouc (UP) since my student years. Thirty years ago, I finished my studies at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry of UP and joined the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the University Hospital Olomouc and the Faculty of Medicine of UP in Olomouc. Later, I received specialized training in gynecology and obstetrics, medical genetics, perinatology and fetomaternal medicine. As a teacher, I teach students at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and Faculty of Health Sciences of UP. In my scientific work I focus on serious complications of pregnancy and the issue of genetically determined blood clotting disorders. I headed the Institute of Midwifery at the Faculty of Health Sciences UP, and the Institute of Medical Genetics at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry UP and the University Hospital Olomouc. I was also the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences UP. Since 2021, I have been the Rector of Palacký University, and since September 2024, I have also been the President of the global university network AURORA, which is an alliance of European universities, putting us among the European elite.

In my election theses for my first term, I declared the sense of responsibility I feel as a member of the academic community of our university, as an academic who is part of a higher education institution with a centuries-old tradition. I feel this responsibility even more keenly when I recall the history of our university, which our forebears managed to carry through periods of war, natural disasters, and political change. I have faced several similar challenges during my time as head of the university, and whether it was the global pandemic of COVID-19 or the need to quickly and effectively assist people affected by war, my sense of responsibility persists in the face of other important challenges.

I still believe that the current social situation places the highest demands on universities, not only in the field of education, science, and research, but also by bringing with it the obligation to respond to current events, threats, and rapid technological changes. None of the things I thought about before I took up my position as Rector have lost their urgency and timeliness. But now, I can additionally use all the experience and relationships I have gained from the Czech Rectors' Conference, the Association of Research Universities, and discussions at the ministerial level, and build on them by seeking memberships on the boards of these institutions. Our alliance activities will enable us to establish national alliances.

The globalised society is currently facing new challenges in the context of war aggression worldwide. The risk of conflict or nuclear threat is returning, and growing economic disparities are increasing tensions in society, leading to social unrest. The development of new digital technologies, in addition to undeniable progress, is also exposing the vulnerability of information systems. Cyber-attacks threatening critical infrastructure are on the rise, disinformation is spreading through cyberspace, and false news, which can manipulate public opinion, continues to proliferate. The digital space also continues to change rapidly with the emergence of artificial intelligence. All of this has an impact on the day-to-day activities at our university and the way we teach our students.

All these global aspects require close cooperation, not only between institutions but especially between the center and the components, all of us within the university. We need to face these challenges together so that we can not only protect our university from these risks but also continue to play our role as an institution that, based on its knowledge, expertise, and scientific know-how, helps to solve these problems for the benefit of its surroundings. Therefore, if we want to respond quickly to current challenges, it is necessary to step out of the paradigm of the traditional brick-and-mortar university. We must be proactive and provide effective and autonomous solutions, anticipating and acting decisively in matters that are completely unexpected or strategically prepared.

## **II. Analysis of the current state of the UP**

When I took over the leadership of the university nearly four years ago in the spring, I had no idea how many different challenges and problems awaited me and my team of Vice-Rectors. I knew I was running for an exposed position and that I would face a series of difficult, complicated, and often nearly intractable challenges and tasks. The internal dispute between the Faculty of Science of UP and the Higher Education Institute of UP (CATRIN) was already widely known. There were long-standing reservations about the work and functioning of the Rector's Office and some other central units. Complicated personnel policies needed resolution, there was dissatisfaction with the transparency of information and overall internal communication, and the budgeting of the university and its individual units was problematic. The methodology of budget allocation and its adjustment was, and still is, a very thorny issue. It was also necessary to address the construction of new buildings, the relocation of existing premises, and new requirements arising from national and European legislation. Countless other issues also had to be addressed.

With all humility, I dare express my conviction that many things have been resolved, changed, or at least partially moved in the right direction over the past four years. At the same time, looking back, I can say with a clear conscience that, four years ago, I unknowingly – perhaps even naively – believed that a number of things would be resolved during my rectorship. It did not, but to judge and criticize from the outside, without knowledge of the specific circumstances, background, and context, is easy but futile. It was only when specific areas and individual problems were analyzed that it became apparent what a complicated mosaic it is. It was only after a closer look at these segments that I understood how intertwined the university is as an organism, and how even a small change can set a whole chain of events in motion. At the same time, it is an organism dependent in many areas on a myriad of external and internal factors that shape and influence its daily operations, often quite invisibly. From the political and financial situation of the Czech Republic and the setting of university funding from the highest level, to fulfilling internal criteria that are crucial for applying for projects and grants, and to the above-standard work of many indispensable employees. That is why I finally opted for solving individual problems using the Kaizen method – taking incremental, often subtle steps forward, rather than extreme measures and drastic interventions. I will continue following this method in my second term as Rector because I have learned my lesson and believe that only through persistent small steps forward can we gradually, non-violently, and by listening to the opinions of others, implement the necessary changes and direct the entire university organism towards development and a positive future. It is necessary to continue the overall UPgrade of UP.

The university is facing, and will continue to face, both major and minor challenges – internal and external. At the moment, there is a need to resolve the long-standing, problematic situation related to the creation of CATRIN. I dare say that during my time at the helm of our university, we have managed to move interpersonal communication toward a more conciliatory line and to set, or at least outline, some gradual steps leading to a long-term stable solution – even though we have not yet fully completed the technical

aspects of the process of establishing a university institute. We have repeatedly seen radical views expressed from both sides, but I want to continue with a gradual solution in the medium and long term. Despite all my efforts, we have not yet been able to resolve this complex issue, but I believe that the longer, albeit painful, path is the right one. It is a path that will promote trust and cooperation, and will be acceptable in the long run, not only to both sides of the dispute but also to the UP Academic Senate.

Several other complex problems and challenges, which must continue to be addressed, will not wait. I am referring in particular to the preparation for the review of compliance with the requirements related to the HR Excellence in Research Award – the international standard for quality rules in the management and development of human resources in science and research, the continuation of the analysis of equal remuneration for employees, and the preparation for dealing with the legislative implications of European and national legislation related to the implementation of the EU directive on transparency of remuneration and its reporting from mid-2027. This is also related to changes in the internal reallocation of funds between different components. Important challenges and tasks include preparing for regaining institutional accreditation in 2028, as well as striving to maintain our position among the top-ranked universities in the Czech Republic.

All these challenges and difficult tasks will have to be faced not only by the Rector and their team of Vice-Rectors, but also through cooperation and the search for compromise, especially with the Deans. I have already taken a number of steps in several of these areas. For example, at my instruction, an internal working group was set up to address the redistribution of funds, which includes representatives from all faculties. Internal groups have also been set up to deal with labor issues, the process of compliance, and setting up management processes related to financial control. However, there is a need to continue and gradually find solutions and compromises in all these core areas.

### **III. Specific priorities and objectives for my second term in office**

In the next part of my theses, I present an overview of the most important results we have achieved through our work together during my first term as Rector (2021–2024). Because I never shy away from the work I have done, I also present the main tasks that, from my point of view, need to be completed so that we can successfully regain institutional accreditation in 2028 after 10 years. This will be one of the most important tasks for the newly elected Rector in the coming period.

**In the field of education** we have managed to significantly strengthen the digitization of education and expand the provision of online tools for flexible forms of learning during the past term. Our successful work in creating courses for virtual and hybrid mobility has also been important, and we were among the first in the Czech Republic to develop a tool for recognizing prior learning and learning outcomes through micro-credentials. In the area of digitization, we have strengthened the process of evaluating study programs within the online information system for the preparation of accreditation dossiers, which has greatly facilitated the approval process itself. We have also significantly supported student activities, both by providing funds for student clubs, establishing the position of student club coordinator, implementing student lectures, and supporting student volunteering. We have also supported students with specific needs by setting service standards and implementing student courses that enhance their competencies. Last but not least, we have also supported student-parents and systematically strengthened their career development through individual consultations in the Career and Guidance Centre and thematic courses and seminars.

There is still great interest in studying at UP, and the number of applicants and students is not decreasing. In 2023, nearly 36,000 applicants applied to study at UP, which significantly exceeds the number of students we can accept. There has also been a slight increase in the number of studies over the last four

years. The number of students per academic staff member (15–16) is stagnating, an area we would like to optimize in the future to achieve a higher quality of teaching and allow our students a more individualized approach from lecturers. Additionally, the area of lifelong learning has seen an increase in interest in training programs and courses in recent years, in some cases up to double the numbers in 2023 compared to 2021. We focused not only on external applicants, but we also worked on a system of education and training for UP employees across various spectrums – development of pedagogical competencies, an agenda of so-called soft skills (such as communication, prevention of burnout, work-life balance, etc.), training in the area of soft target protection, periodic training in first aid provision, training in the area of open science, and the area of intellectual property rights.

### **My vision for education**

1. I want to prepare the university as best as possible to regain institutional accreditation in 2028.
2. There is a need to complete the optimization of existing study programs, ensure their continuous evaluation, and promote inter-faculty and interdisciplinary cooperation.
3. I want to support the further development of joint degree study programs, especially with partner universities within the AURORA alliance, but it is also necessary to start a system of capacity sharing with partner universities in the Czech Republic.
4. Based on the pilot program, we have verified that it is important to further support the development of lifelong learning programs in the context of micro-credentials and their recognition (within the framework of studies at UP, in cooperation with partner universities in the AURORA alliance and possibly other global partners).
5. There is a need to further support the development of teaching competencies for academic staff, for example by building a specialized center, and also to provide mentoring and coaching to aspiring teachers.
6. I am going to complete the digitalization of the study agenda and its implementation following the amendment to the Higher Education Act and the further development of IS STAG.
7. We need to ensure the further development of the AKRUP accreditation information system, including testing of AI-based algorithmization tools.
8. I want to enable the further development of support for students with special needs, including exceptionally talented students and socio-economically disadvantaged students.
9. It is necessary to complete the optimization of the model of teaching financing methodology at UP, which is related to the new method of dividing the contribution of the Ministry of Education and Science in indicator A.
10. I intend to strengthen the support of student interests and needs, for example by increasing the number of student representatives in the Rector's College and continuing to support student societies.

**In the field of science and research** we have set up a career guidance system and a mechanism for the protection of doctoral students and taken measures to create a social background and reconcile the academic career and family life of doctoral students.

The number of professors has increased in the last three years, while the number of associate professors has rather stagnated. Therefore, in the next period, we want to focus on supporting the career growth of academic staff in this area. A positive trend is that the University has received a significant increase in financial support from the Ministry of Education and Science for research activities in 2023 compared to 2022. Positive results also include an increase in UP's publication outputs in Q1 and D1 (on Scopus according to SJR in Scopus categories) compared to 2021. In some categories (e.g., citations of publications), there is a gradual decline. At the moment, we are working on analyzing the causes and proposing measures. In recent years, UP has also intensively promoted interdisciplinary and international

research cooperation, with 12 interdisciplinary centers operating at UP in 2023 and hundreds of joint publications with dozens of major foreign institutions. In 2023–2024, exclusive internal standards on copyright protection and research data management were prepared and issued with the participation of all units. In addition, there is continuous training in these areas and implementation of principles of effective data management through central support. In 2023, UP also signed the international Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA), by which it subscribes to a progressive and sustainable research assessment system.

In the area of technology transfer, the volume of funds received at UP has been decreasing in recent years, which is an area we want to support in the next period. One of the key steps for a more intensive connection between the university and the application sphere was the opening of the new VTP-D building on the Envelopa campus, which is co-located with the UP Science and Technology Park (VTP UP), the Innovation Centre of the Olomouc Region, and regional companies – all allowing a closer connection and more intensive cooperation with the application sphere in the future.

### **My vision for science and research**

1. I want to complete the implementation of the recommendations for scientific research activities resulting from the evaluation of the international evaluation panel according to Methodology 17+ and to address in detail the recommendations resulting from the evaluation according to Methodology 2025+, taking them into account in the revision of internal processes and the development of the methodology for the division of the DKRVO.
2. I initiated the elaboration of the Evaluation Strategy of UP as a research institution, defining the principles of excellence in creative activities, including the evaluation of the social relevance of research.
3. I want to ensure the creation of systemic incentive tools for supporting excellent research, for submitting projects to major international schemes (ERC, Horizon, etc.), and for the publication of the most important types of publication outputs according to Methodology 17+ (selected results for Module 1, publication outputs of type D1, Q1, Q2).
4. I am going to strengthen the methodological support of creative activities at UP in the form of a virtual R&D support center using the services of individual departments of RUP to support academic and scientific staff at UP.
5. I will continue to support the career development of academic staff and the use of motivational tools for successful internal management in habilitation and professorships.
6. I want to support the development of the Open Science 2.0 strategy alongside the further development of effective research data management.
7. I want to ensure the implementation of data warehouses and data management for summarizing and evaluating the results of creative activities.
8. In view of the declining results, I want to systematically strengthen cooperation with the application sphere through the VTP UP and provide education to academic and scientific staff and students of the DSP in the field of knowledge transfer, intellectual property protection, and project activities.
9. I will ensure maximum possible support for the UP Evaluation in 2025 with regard to the coordination of processes within UP, the evaluation by the International Evaluation Panel that I have proposed, and representation to external bodies in the feedback to the Evaluation 2025.

**In the area of strategic management and quality management** we have implemented data warehouses at UP for the registration and subsequent evaluation of the results of educational activities, which enable the automated collection and summarization of data. We have completed the update of the UP process map, started the optimization of the evaluation systems, the IS HAP system based on the comments of employee representatives and the national Methodology 17+, and the implementation of the IS HOP

system for the evaluation of other UP employees. For the quality management system of UP activities, based on the European Excellence Model EFQM, we won first place in the National Quality Award of the Czech Republic in the Excellence Programme in the public sector category in 2023.

We have significantly strengthened the area of sustainable development and social responsibility at UP in recent years. We have developed a Sustainable Development Strategy for UP and implemented several procedural and investment measures to ensure compliance with sustainable principles in all areas of UP's activities. Here, too, we are proceeding in line with our partners in the European AURORA Alliance, whose mandate is, among other things, to coordinate the objectives of the participating universities in the area of the social impact of their activities and the promotion of sustainable development.

In the area of the third role of the university, we won the 2022 Olomouc Region Governor's Award for Social Responsibility in the category of public sector organizations, and in 2023, we won first place in the national competition Business Project of the Year for the construction of the VTP-D building - Envelopa HUB, which naturally linked UP's research activities with the regional application sphere. In 2024, we won the Olomouc Region Award for Environmental Contribution in the category of significant achievement in waste separation and recycling.

**In the area of communication** we continue to develop the concept of building a unified university brand. We have increased the number of platforms for communicating strategic changes, introduced regular updates on the outcomes of management meetings in the UP Portal, and continue to send a regular electronic newsletter in Czech and English by e-mail to all employees and students, which regularly summarizes key information, events, as well as newly issued or updated internal standards. We have taken advantage of new social networking opportunities and regularly informed about the countless activities and events that the University organizes or participates in. We continue to produce promotional materials, develop the university's merchandise, support the UPoint community center, conduct regular media monitoring and benchmarking, and support university campaigns in the region and abroad.

#### **My vision for strategic management, quality management and communication**

1. It is necessary to consistently separate the management of the University into standard service and administrative processes (procedural management) and strategic decisions of the UP management, defined in agreement with the deans of the faculties (strategic management).
2. I am going to strengthen the Rector's College by adding another student representative to gain a more objective insight into the needs and problems of students.
3. Furthermore, I want to support, strengthen, and promote the principles of sustainable development and social responsibility at UP in accordance with the common principles emerging from the cooperation between universities in the Aurora Alliance.
4. I want to target the whole spectrum of modern internal and external communication tools, which must be open, clear, transparent, and follow clear ethical rules.
5. I will carry out regular feedback surveys through questionnaires and surveys of all target groups to which all activities of the University relate, and I want to incorporate these suggestions into decision-making in the management of UP.
6. I will work on the completion of data processing automation, which will mean the full implementation of data warehouses as a digitized tool for the creation of analyses, administrative reports, evaluation of strategies, and presentation of UP.
7. It is necessary to carry out further construction and reconstruction of buildings and facilities of UP according to the plan of investment actions of UP.

**In the organisational and internal areas** we conducted a review and analysis of key agendas, including downstream processes, and evaluated areas that appeared to be insufficiently or inappropriately set up in

terms of ensuring the smooth internal running of the University. The key internal areas that have been, and in part still need to be, addressed primarily include:

**The human resources management agenda**, where it is necessary to continue and set up methods and tools common in a modern employer, to emphasize the fulfilment of the requirements within the HR Award and Fair University, to continue the systematization of benefits for employees, to make flexible forms of work performance available to a wider range of employees (enabling telework, setting the conditions for flexible working hours), to find a compromise between faculties and other components, and to elaborate a new internal standard for the central social fund of the University. In the future, more emphasis should be placed on training employees in the field of social pathologies, their solutions, and prevention. At the same time, a new position of university-wide ombudsman has been established in this area, whose agenda will include the resolution of complaints in the area of labour law, as well as methodological guidance and training in interpersonal relations.

**The labour law agenda**, where on my instruction an internal interdisciplinary working group was established at the Rectorate in spring 2023 (Legal Department, Human Resources Management Department, Security Department, Bursar's Office), which is gradually working on updating and issuing a number of key internal standards and regulations in this area. After almost ten years, new Work Rules have been drafted and issued; follow-up methodological guidelines are being prepared; periodic staff training is underway, including training for senior staff only; after internal discussion and with the approval of the deans, a completely new UP Internal Wage Regulation is being prepared, simultaneously following the agenda related to equal pay and the university-wide equal pay analysis. Equal remuneration, or the setting of the possibility of comparison, is also related to the modification of a number of other internal standards in the field of labour law (the Catalogue of Jobs at UP, the Career Regulations, the Periodic Evaluation of Employees). At the same time, during my tenure as the head of UP, a regular dialogue and regular meetings have been established between the employer (the University) and the trade unions operating at UP (currently 11 of them), so that it is transparent in communicating what changes will occur on the part of the employer. The plan for 2025 is to prepare a new collective agreement.

**Agenda related to internal standards**, which needs to be continued in simplifying the system of internal standards and regulations. In 2022, the Legal Department conducted an audit of existing standards and proposed standards and regulations for repeal, amendment, or comprehensive revision. The standards are gradually being modified in cooperation with the sponsors of the standards. The new system of standardisation at UP was also presented and positively received at a meeting with deans and is being developed into a new internal regulation. At the same time, a new repository of UP methodological guidelines within UPShare was launched. Methodological guidelines will be gradually developed for many areas (e.g., OSH, cyber security, sustainability, etc.).

**Security Agenda**, in which basic steps related to cybersecurity and information security were taken. Standards related to HSE have been updated, and progress has also been made in the area of security and protection of soft targets. However, there is a need to develop this area, including the new Harm Prevention Agenda, in the future. New standards have been adopted in the context of cybersecurity, and pilot training for UP staff has been conducted at the same time. Similarly, in the area of OSH and OHS, existing standards are gradually being updated, and follow-up methodological guidelines are being prepared. In the framework of soft target protection, practical training in crisis situations with the involvement of the IRS units has been carried out, and penetration tests are underway.

**The Management Control Agenda**, where another equally important interdisciplinary working group (Legal Department, Internal Audit and Control Department, Bursar's Office, Strategy Department) was created alongside the internal working group on labour law. Its main task was and is to set up the

management control process at UP, or the process related to the requirements for setting up internal financial control processes, including control processes within the framework of internal audit and control. Within the scope of this working group's activities, several new internal standards and updates of existing standards are also in preparation – the Management Control Regulations, the Internal Audit Statute, the standard for handling complaints and petitions at UP, and related methodological guidelines.

The digitisation of individual agendas, or the gradual digitisation of individual parts and processes, is intrinsically linked to the above. So far, we have digitised several personnel documents to reduce the administrative burden and save the environment (e.g., electronic attendance records, electronically submitted and approved requests for leave or work from home, a simple system for reporting security threats and problems, development of the UPLICATION). We have strengthened the number of our own software solutions within the administrative processes of UP (development of the functionalities of the internal central register of contracts, electronic creation of a request for signing a contract, development of employee evaluation systems – IS HAP and IS HOP, etc.). The ongoing digitisation of the University was also reflected in the digitisation of archiving processes and the construction and subsequent opening of the new UP Archives building.

### **My vision for the organisational and internal area**

1. I want to strengthen the internal stability and health of the University by reorganizing and restructuring the systems supporting management processes at UP. Furthermore, I aim to professionalize and optimize the bureaucratic apparatus of the Rector's Office. It is necessary to support a professional, continuously educated, regularly evaluated, and, if possible, stable administrative apparatus. I will promote capacity sharing at the level of the Rectorate to avoid duplication of reporting and the burden of mismatches between faculty and university departments.
2. To ensure the legislative security of the University, it is necessary to continue to create an adequate legal environment at the national and EU levels by updating and amending the system of internal standards of the University. We aim to strengthen the support of UP employees by filling the position of University Ombudsman.
3. In order to ensure the digital security of the university, I must necessarily strengthen the tools to protect UP from digital threats and sufficiently secure the protection of information.
4. It is essential to meet the commitments within the HR Award and to further implement and strengthen the principles of employee care, maintaining this high level defined by European standards within the framework of the UP human resources management strategy.
5. I want to continue transparent and continuous communication with the trade unions, develop a new collective agreement, and continue the process of redrafting internal regulations and standards related to equal pay.

We have made significant progress in **internationalisation** in recent years. We have strengthened existing partnerships and established new international collaborations, particularly in the United States over the last two years. Examples include deepening cooperation with the University of Minnesota and strengthening the relationship between UP and the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Through this cooperation, we have created a new opportunity for our students and staff with the establishment of the Josef Jařab and Douglas Kristensen Funds, which will support bilateral exchanges of students and scholars between the Czech Republic and the USA.

Above all, however, we have significantly strengthened our position in Europe, thanks to the opportunity to take over the Presidency of the European alliance AURORA, which I have the honour to chair from 2024. This is both an important achievement and a major responsibility that has allowed us to elevate our



university's profile in Europe and to share our good practices with leading European universities. Membership in the alliance has also brought our university several new international opportunities for joint education at alliance universities, international mobility, research internships, and work in international research teams. These opportunities should significantly enhance not only the international dimension of UP but also the results of creative activities based on research at the global level.

In recent years, we have also increased the number of foreign language study programmes, and the number of students in Double Degree and Joint Degree programmes has grown. After several years of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have gradually started to increase the number of international mobilities again, with the most significant increase observed in 2023.

As part of the national evaluation of scientific research activities, the results of universities in international rankings are currently analysed, which the University regularly monitors and evaluates over a long period. In the last three years, UP has maintained its position in all three major rankings (THE, QS, ARWU) and slightly improved it in 2023.

#### **My vision for internationalisation**

1. In order to maintain our leading role within the AURORA alliance, it will be essential to further enhance UP's active role and expand its position in the organization and coordination of activities within the alliance.
2. I aim to strengthen and further develop the activities resulting from our newly established partnerships in the United States.
3. I will continue to focus on fostering closer cooperation with German-speaking countries, particularly Austria and Germany.
4. Additionally, I will support continued collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, the House of Foreign Cooperation, Czech embassies abroad, and foreign embassies in Prague.
5. I intend to strengthen UP's position in international rankings by continuing to implement the established strategy for improving our standing in these rankings.

#### **IV. Management and Management Strategy of UP**

This section of the election thesis is dedicated to the management strategy and governance of Palacký University (UP), with a particular focus on the administrative and strategic functions, while deliberately omitting the term "Rectorate" in the title to highlight the broader scope. Strategic management and governance should be understood in a more comprehensive sense than merely focusing on the UP Rectorate as one of the central units of the university. Palacký University has over four thousand employees, approximately one-third of whom are non-academic and non-scientific, i.e., "technical and economic staff and other employees." The UP Rector's Office employs around 200 of these employees, making up only a small fraction of the total number.

The UP Rector's Office serves as an administrative base, intended to provide essential services to other parts of the university. However, it also functions as a critical part of the university, fulfilling the institution's obligations and responsibilities. These include numerous requirements imposed by the Higher Education Act (e.g., preparation of the periodic annual report, setting strategic plans), duties as an employer (such as processing and providing information on employees to the CSSA authorities), and other legislative requirements related to the university's legal status. Furthermore, the Rector's Office is often perceived as the "headquarters," responsible for overseeing various processes not only through its own employees but also by providing methodological guidance and setting standards for the entire university.

I have been addressing the functionality and dysfunctionality of the Rector's Office and its staffing for an extended period, including a transparent external process and personnel audit, which has yielded valuable insights in several areas that have been progressively implemented. Over time, I have worked to transform the Rectorate from its previous, relatively rigid structure, adapting it to the evolving needs and challenges the University faces today and will continue to face in the years ahead, including the departments under the Vice-Rectors.

The Rector's Office needs to be gradually transformed into a functional base that not only fulfills its statutory competences but also provides methodological support to the individual units of the University, including the faculties. Its organizational structure and activities must be aligned to effectively support the management of the University and enable its development, keeping pace with current needs and challenges. It is essential to ensure the stability of knowledgeable and skilled staff to carry out critical tasks and establish fair and collaborative methodological guidelines for all parts of the University.

The main pillars of the Rectorate's activities should be the following areas:

**Administrative service** – the Rector's Office should provide a number of key central processes for the faculties and other units of UP, or for the university as a whole, starting with basic employment and personnel matters, through central legal support to economic and tax matters.

**Methodological activities** – the Rector's Office should provide methodological support to faculties and other parts of the university, create model methodological procedures and set standards.

**Monitoring activities** – at the same time, the Rector's Office should carry out monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure compliance with the rules and the fulfilment of the University's strategic objectives.

The RUP should have high quality staff to ensure the smooth running of key departments. However, some will need to be strengthened in the light of legislative developments. These include:

**Personnel department** dealing with the University's personnel policy, recruitment and development of employees and related employment documents.

**Security related department**, whether it be workplace safety and fire protection, soft target protection, cybersecurity, information security or counter-intelligence agenda.

**The legal department** providing legal support to all parts of the university.

**Economic department** responsible for financial management, budgets and accounting.

**Control and audit department, or the compliance agenda** ensuring internal control, risk prevention and regular audits.

Although the processing of the individual agendas within the departments and divisions of the Rector's Office is important and often requested by other parts of the University, it must be emphasized that while the activities of the Rector's Office are essential for the administrative functioning of the University, they are not all-encompassing. The Rector's Office has long established numerous processes and methodological procedures, yet these are not always accepted or consistently followed by other parts of the University. Additionally, in the past, the faculties themselves actively advocated for the decentralization of certain key areas. Over time, however, this approach has proven to be problematic in some areas, and, following the insights and recommendations of external audit bodies, it seems more effective to centralize the management of specific agendas.

Moving forward, all activities and processes will be conducted with the utmost transparency and openness, ensuring clear communication and cooperation across the university. This approach will foster

a more cohesive and unified environment for the University's operations, and ensure that all stakeholders are informed and engaged in the decision-making processes.

## **V. Vision of the long-term direction of UP**

I have already outlined several long-term visions and related steps above. Let me now conclude with a personal wish. I hope that Palacký University will continue to be a stable, broadly focused institution, committed to its efforts to be a university of the 21st century. A university that provides its students with all available information impartially and objectively, ensuring maximum comfort in their studies. Moreover, I hope it remains a university of which its graduates can justly be proud, proudly claiming its legacy. At the same time, I want the university to continue being a modern employer that offers the most stable and welcoming work environment for its staff.

I wish for the university to be competitive in all its activities. However, its competitiveness largely depends on our ability to learn from past mistakes and misunderstandings, ensuring we do not repeat them in the future. Equally important is our ability to be proactive in facing new challenges and addressing problems we may have previously overlooked or not yet resolved. We must approach these challenges with a team-based solution, making Palacký University a more efficient and professional institution. This includes a Rectorate that offers both operational management and strong methodological support across all areas, ensuring transparent processes driven by the interests of all components of the university. The university should maintain open communication both internally and externally, with clearly defined strategies and methods for implementation, alongside regular monitoring and evaluation in all strategic areas. I want UP to be not only strongly networked but also positioned in leadership roles within both our university alliance and other international organizations. I envision changes that foster open, well-secured research with meaningful social and scientific impact.

Reflecting on the past four years, I feel a sense of optimism and pride in the achievements of our staff and students, as well as in the significant progress our university has made. It is rewarding to see students becoming increasingly active in the university community, contributing greatly to the development and enhancement of UP's reputation. I am pleased with the successful outcomes we have seen and the solutions we have implemented, which are clearly heading in the right direction. At the beginning of my first term, I pledged to uphold one of the fundamental principles of medical ethics – *primum non nocere*, above all, do no harm. I believe I have honored this commitment so far, and I will continue to do so in the future, should I have the honor of serving another term as Rector.