

žurnál

Magazine of Palacký University Olomouc, 2024/2

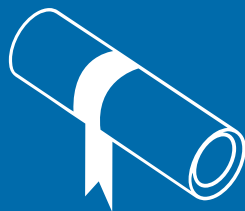
interview

Lucie Plíhalová:
In science, you mustn't get discouraged by failure



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contents

- 2 — Mindful of its memory: UP has new archives building
- 4 — Hundreds of metamorphoses during Long Night of the Sciences
- 5 — The Josef Jařab Scholarship Fund in the USA
- 6 — Faculty of Arts experts will focus on the unique decorations of Kroměříž Chateau
- 6 — Health Talks introduce experiences of people with unspecified intestinal inflammations
- 7 — New gymnasium built at the Faculty of Physical Culture
- 7 — Two international schools in one week
- 8 — Silver graduation ceremony for Faculty of Science alumni
- 8 — Monograph addressing digitalisation, robotisation, and cyber security in EU law
- 9 — 2024 Magister Optimus: Faculty of Education awarded its best teachers
- 9 — Brain bank will contribute to research and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases
- 10 — Dominik Kusý: Science is more than just a profession to me – it's a passion
- 11 — Diabetes during pregnancy can lead to blood vessel development disorders in the placenta
- 12 — Atomic antibiotics counter bacterial resistance
- 13 — Portrait – Jakub Jurka: UP fencer, Olympic bronze medallist: You can feel special, but you still need to have your feet on the ground
- 16 — Student athletes
- 18 — Success
- 22 — Eliška Zgarbová: It's important for us as scientists to simply explain what we do
- 23 — Marie Prařáková: I take science popularisation contests as a challenge
- 24 — Archbishop Josef Nuzík: I'm pleased how the Faculty of Theology is evolving
- 25 — We brought help where floods brought destruction
- 26 — University on the road: Colours of Ostrava
- 27 — Interview – Lucie Plíhalová: In science, you mustn't get discouraged by failure
- 30 — Kaleidoscope
- 32 — Silvie Chlumcová: I shadowed the British ambassador
- 33 — Experience – Michael Mitraš: A real-life model for making one's dreams come true
- 35 — Alumna – Aneta Fricová, pet physiotherapist
- 37 — UP wins Olomouc Region Award for its contributions to the environment
- 38 — Reflection – China
- 39 — Bedel Josef Horák: When I hear those fanfares, I get chills up and down my spine
- 40 — Heritage – The "Bedel"

cover – scientist Lucie Plíhalová | photo: Jakub Čermák

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Dear Students, Colleagues, and Friends of Palacký University,

The winter semester and thus the new academic year are now upon us. After the summer months, the university's spaces have come alive again, and Olomouc with them. The student atmosphere has returned to its streets, turning Olomouc back into a real university town. I personally love this time of year the best, the flood of events and responsibilities balanced by the many interesting encounters with young people. They recharge me with their positive energy: I love meeting students when teaching or at other events, I can feel their desire and courage to learn new things, I admire their determination to learn and to expand and develop their knowledge and talents. And this is what we are focusing on in this new edition of Žurnál. We present a university glowing with so many talents. The university environment: a community which supports and inspires. A place where there is space for everyone to work on themselves, and to dedicate themselves to what they enjoy and what fulfills them.

The stories of our undergraduates and our doctoral students, our scientists and academics, and our alumni have their magic thanks to that special mix of purpose, hard work, and talent. A mix of important qualities and abilities, one which helps to launch them into the most diverse fields where – even at a young age – they are able to truly shine. Just read for example about the law student who already has had experience abroad, who never ceases to pursue his dreams, and who also helps open the doors of education to minorities; or the media and cultural studies student who got a glimpse into the highest echelons of diplomacy when she spent a day working with the British ambassador. I was also captivated by the recent physiotherapy graduate who is making use of the knowledge she has gained to care for people's pets, and by the young scientist who was so entranced by the insect kingdom he is now studying their evolution. Some are proving their talent by winning competitions in academic fields, others on athletic fields – including the recent Paris Olympics.

All these stories are a part of our university, a university which offers endless amounts of possibilities and opportunities.

Wishing you pleasant reading,

Rector Martin Procházka



Mindful of its memory: UP has new archives building

Up to six kilometres of documents will be stored in the depositories in the new building of the specialised archives which has been inaugurated by Palacký University Olomouc. The three-storey building has been built close to the campus in Olomouc-Neředín and offers the public a spacious research room as well as a small conference hall where lectures and educational events can take place. The overall cost of building and furnishing the new archives came close to €7,150,000; about a quarter of the cost was covered from the university budget, while the remaining part was covered by a state subsidy provided by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports.

“The care for collective memory is vital for the preservation of our cultural identity, and this is what society rightly expects from

universities. I am therefore very pleased that we can open these new premises that provide respectable conditions for the institution of our memory. At the same time, the history of the university is an important part of both the history of the city and the region. I therefore wish all researchers who want to use the services of our archives to always find the information they came here for,” said UP Rector Martin Procházka during the opening ceremony.

The UP Archives are one of twelve accredited university and scientific institutions whose mission is to protect and preserve historical written sources emerging from academic activities in the country. “We take care of documents that relate to Palacký University, i.e. to the more recent history of our university, reinstated in 1946. Older university materials from the

late sixteenth to the mid-twentieth century are located in the Olomouc branch of the Opava Regional Archives,” explained Pavel Urbášek, director of the UP Archives.

The university began to consider erecting a new building for its archives, founded in the 1990s, more than ten years ago. “Until now, we were located in parts of the ground floor and basement of the Theresian Armoury in the town centre. Our capacities are basically exhausted, with about a quarter of our archival materials stored at the faculties. About one kilometre of documents are currently stored in our existing depositories. The new building will allow us to store up to six kilometres of archival materials, so we have sufficient reserve for many years to come,” said the UP Archives director.

The first two floors of the new building are accessible only to archives staff. This is where a total of eight depositories are located, equipped with modern air-conditioning and staff offices. The third floor is half glass-enclosed and is designated for the general public. “In the comfortable premises of the research room, interested persons can study materials, which we will gladly retrieve and make available to

them. The conference room has a capacity of forty people and can be used for thematic events and lectures. We’re already making arrangements with the University of the Third Age, which plans to hold part of its teaching sessions here. We want the new premises to be alive and serve in the best way possible,” added Urbášek.

Among Czech university archives, the Olomouc one is unique in that it was erected as a new building on the site of a former military facility. “In our domain, it is not common that a completely new building is erected for an archive – usually, it’s just older ones that are renovated. I would like to congratulate Palacký University on this fine achievement,” said Milan Vojáček, Director of the National Archives, at the opening ceremony.

The construction of the building started at the beginning of 2022 and was completed in July 2024. The depositories of the new building are still empty, as the humidity in the new building must first decrease in order to properly preserve the documents. The archival materials will therefore be moved into the modern premises within a few months.

UP Archives

- founded in the 1990s at the initiative of then rector Josef Jařab
- take care of historical documents and the collective memory of Palacký University Olomouc
- preserve archival records of the reinstated university since 1946
- are kept at a constant temperature of 18 °C and 50% humidity in its depositories
- contain personal files, scientific papers, photographs, film reels, etc.
- 3 archivists are responsible for the operation and services for the professional as well as general public





Hundreds of metamorphoses during Long Night of the Sciences

The Long Night of the Sciences, this year's topic inspired by Kafka's "The Metamorphosis", offered a lot – from colourful chemical experiments through a series of medical simulations to virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and nanomaterials. The programme was made possible by all eight faculties of Palacký University Olomouc, as well as the CATRIN university institute, Fort Science, the UP library, and the UP Science and Technology Park. Selected departments were presented at University Hospital Olomouc and visitors could also attend interesting activities in Přerov, Prostějov, and Hlubočky. "This year, for the first time, the Jeseník Gymnasium was supposed to be involved, but that could not happen due to the floods. So we decided to send two buses for the gymnasium students and for pupils of the Jeseník Primary School to bring them to Olomouc for the Long Night of the Sciences. Our students first showed the guests around the city and then took them to events at the Faculties of Science and Education and at Fort Science. The Jeseník children said they loved the trip," said Ondřej Martínek, coordinator of the event, adding that a record 13,000 people visited the Long Night of the Sciences in Olomouc alone. (vim)

photos: O. Blahoušek | M. Višňa | V. Duda | V. Černá



photo: Tereza Kalousková

The Josef Jařab Scholarship Fund in the USA

Palacký University took advantage of a unique opportunity during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the National Czech and Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, with whom UP has long cooperated. In the presence of important guests, including Czech President Petr Pavel, a scholarship fund named after Josef Jařab, American Studies scholar and UP Rector Emeritus, was officially launched to support mutual exchanges of students and academics between UP and American universities. "Here in Iowa, there has been a strong Czech community for over a century, and museum partners and sponsors are also supporting our scholarship fund, which bears the good name of Josef Jařab. In this way we have been able to fulfil the legacy of our first post-Velvet Revolution rector, who three decades ago helped open the doors to cooperation with American universities," explained Rector Martin Procházka (in the photo, together with President Petr Pavel and Cecilia Rokusek, president of the National Czech and Slovak Museum & Library). (eg)

8 faculties
1 university



Faculty of Arts experts will focus on the unique decorations of Kroměříž Chateau

Experts from the UP Faculty of Arts will help to explore and describe a unique historical monument, one of the most valued parts of the Archbishop's Chateau in Kroměříž. Their research will focus on the ground floor of the castle complex, where uniquely decorated rooms are located – the sala terrena and grottoes. These have been preserved in their almost original, early Baroque form and represent a passage between the garden wing of the chateau and the Chateau Garden. The results of the research should be helpful in the further maintenance of the precious decorations of the castle. The Memorandum of Cooperation was signed in Kroměříž by UP Rector Martin Procházka and Archbishop of Olomouc Josef Nuzík.

The document, signed by the top representatives of both institutions, also empha-

sises the importance of an interdisciplinary approach involving experts from various fields of art-historical and built heritage preservation. “Academics and students from the Department of Art History at the UP Faculty of Arts have been involved in the study of works of art of the Olomouc Archdiocese for a long time. The project, which focuses on the unique decorations of the castle interior, will thus build on the previous cooperation of several partners, among whom our university has made a significant contribution to the knowledge of the extraordinary personality of the bishop and patron Karl von Lichtenstein-Castelcornio, the builder of the Kroměříž chateau,” said Rector Procházka.

The importance of the involvement of various disciplines was also emphasised by

Jana Zapletalová, head of the Department of Art History at the Faculty of Arts, who will be responsible for the cooperation on the part of the university. “The sala terrena and grottoes are among the most valuable parts of the Archbishop's Chateau and their unique and relatively authentically preserved decorations are among the major historical monuments of Europe. However, the understanding and study of these decorative systems is one of the most challenging tasks in art-historical and conservation practice, as it combines a diverse range of art types and materials and requires a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach,” she noted. The restoration interventions will be preceded by extensive research and cooperation with experts in several disciplines from the Czech Republic and abroad. (map)

Health Talks introduce experiences of people with unspecified intestinal inflammations

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are new topics on the Health Talks portal, which brings together the experiences and insights of people with specific diagnoses. Thirty-six respondents aged 21–69 living throughout the Czech Republic who are struggling with non-specific inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), shared their stories with the research team from the Olomouc University Social Health Institute (OUSHI) at the UP Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty

of Theology. The information they shared can help both the patients themselves and the professionals who work with them.

The audio and video recordings describe patients' memories of when they first developed symptoms of these diseases, their insights into the course and management of the diseases, their experiences with healthcare, and how the diseases have affected their social and working lives – also including their messages to other patients, their loved ones and doctors, and positive insights. For example, some reported to have learned to appreciate small things and to find joy in everyday moments; they also mentioned improved personal relationships and a greater will to live.

“We made sure that we had an equal representation of women and men, of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis patients, that they were from places all over

the country, and that those selected included those who have been dealing with the disease for a short time as well as those who have been living with IBD for, say, twenty years. All these factors have impact on their stories and provide a wide variety of shared experiences,” said Hana Bednaříková, who has been working as a psychologist with IBD patients for a long time, as this is her specialisation at OUSHI.

Patients' organisations IBD Patients and Czech ILCO – a voluntary association of ostomates – helped with addressing the respondents, and the research and mediation of patients' experiences were carried out according to the Oxford DIPEX (Database of Individual Patient Experience) methodology, based on in-depth qualitative interviews. The Czech version of this methodology was developed at OUSHI, certified by DIPEX in the Czech Republic. (vim)



New gymnasium built at the Faculty of Physical Culture

The UP Faculty of Physical Culture is preparing to move the Department of Sport from the town centre to the Neředín Campus. A new gymnasium for sports gymnastics is being built next to the NC building, where offices for the relocated teachers have already been renovated. The construction work also includes the addition of a new entrance to the building.

Construction workers have thus reappeared on the faculty's premises in Neředín after a short time. In recent years, the faculty has gradually renovated teaching spaces and offices in both of its original buildings and relocated some departments. The most recent renovation involved the offices that previously served the relocated Department of Physiotherapy, which are expected to be occupied by the Department of Sport teachers next year. For now, the latter are housed in the rented Hynaisova St building in the town centre.

The renovation and furnishing of the vacant offices are followed by the construction of a new gymnasium. "The original annex, which housed classrooms and a smaller gym used by the physio-

therapy department, will become a new, fully-fledged gymnasium for sports gymnastics. This will replace the gymnastics hall in the Hynaisova St building, whose rental under the current conditions is secured until the end of August 2025. By that time, the new gym should be furnished, and the Department of Sport should be completely moved to Neředín," said Michal Šafář, Dean of the UP Faculty of Physical Culture.

Along with the construction of the new gymnasium, the NC building will also get a new wheelchair-accessible main entrance with a reception area. At the same time, the side entrance to the dean's office building, which has not yet been renovated, will also be adapted to be barrier-free. The Brno studio Hexaplan International is responsible for the design of all the renovated parts, as in the case of previous renovations of the original buildings of the Faculty of Physical Culture. Construction is financed from the ERDF project Restoration of Infrastructure in the Neředín Campus, and the total cost including the gym furnishings should reach €2 million. (vim)



Two international schools in one week

Resuscitation of the newborn, ultrasound screening, suturing of birth incisions, and physiotherapy – these are just a few of the topics on the busy programme of this year's international Olomouc School in Midwifery. The fifth year of the event organised by the Department of Midwifery at the UP Faculty of Health Sciences was attended by academics and students from

partner institutions in Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Norway, and Slovakia.

"One of the main goals of the midwifery school is to exchange experiences among countries. This year's event was enriched by midwifery students and lecturers from the University of Leipzig. From their feedback so far, we know that everyone appreciated the rich programme and that the

week spent in Olomouc was beneficial for everyone," said Head of the Department of Midwifery Štěpánka Bubeníková about the event, attended by almost thirty foreign students.

In the same week, the Department of Clinical Rehabilitation organised the third Czech School in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. The twenty-seven participants included students and lecturers from Finland and Croatia. For one day, the two international schools merged. "This allowed the students to experience the possibilities of interdisciplinary cooperation with women during pregnancy as well as after childbirth and in the puerperium. Numerous questions and lively discussions showed great interest in the topics we covered," said Petra Gaul Aláčová on behalf of the organisers. The packed programme also included an excursion to the Klimkovič Rehabilitation Centre and a workshop on the use of yoga techniques and mindfulness in physiotherapy.

Both international schools were held in collaboration with University Hospital Olomouc within the BIP Erasmus+ programme. (dkr)



8 faculties
1 university



Silver graduation ceremony for Faculty of Science alumni

Not even rainy weather could spoil the good mood of the UP Faculty of Science alumni who repeated their solemn faculty oaths after twenty-five years. The former students were welcomed in the auditorium by the dignitaries of both the faculty and the university, headed by Vice-Rector Lucie Plíhalová and Dean Martin Kubala.

Thirty-four former students of the Faculty of Science enjoyed the opportunity to experience the silver graduation ceremony. Among them was Emil Kudrnovský, the principal of Bílá Třemešná Primary School and Kindergarten. “I always love to come back to Olomouc because I spent over elev-

en years here. First I studied Mathematics-Geography and then Geoinformatics. I wanted to see my classmates, because we haven’t seen each other for twenty-five years,” Kudrnovský said. According to him, it is a great advantage for the current students that the Faculty of Science building now stands near the canteen and the dormitories. “We used to have to attend the faculty in Olomouc-Hejčín, which was a half-hour walk each way.”

Among this year’s invited alumni were also current academic staff of the Faculty of Science – Marie Chodorová from the Department of Algebra and Geometry,

Petr Cankař from the Department of Organic Chemistry, and Vladan Ondřej, Head of the Department of Botany. “Silver graduation means meeting my classmates. That was the reason I came here,” said Ondřej.

The ceremony, during which the alumni received commemorative diplomas, was also attended by Vice-Dean Miloš Dušek. The host of the silver graduation ceremony was Jan Hlaváč, while Josef Horák and Filip Kovařík took on the role of bedels. After the oath-taking ceremony in the auditorium and a group photo session, a tour of the faculty, a toast with the dignitaries, and lunch followed. (cho)

Monograph addressing digitalisation, robotisation, and cyber security in EU law

It is 400 pages long, co-authored by an international team from six countries, led by experts from the UP Faculty of Law, and deals with an extremely topical and yet almost unexplored legal area. The monograph *Legal Issues of Digitalisation, Robotisation, and Cyber Security in the Light of EU Law* is the main result of a project

supported by a prestigious grant awarded by the European Commission in the Jean Monnet Networks category.

The grant was awarded to the project “European Union and the Challenges of Modern Society: Legal Issues of Digitalisation, Robotisation, Cyber Security, and Prevention of Hybrid Threats”. The four-year work of the international team was coordinated by the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in European Law at the UP Faculty of Law, headed by Naděžda Šišková. “The research topic was chosen six years ago. We were one of the first who dared to delve into this issue,” Šišková elaborated.

The Olomouc centre collaborated on the project with academics from the University of Heidelberg, Tallinn University of Technology, Comenius University Bratislava, and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Two other major research insti-

tutions were involved in the preparation of the book – the Institute of State and Law of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Institute of State and Law of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Non-academic experts were also invited, in particular from the Czech Office for Personal Data Protection and the NATO Centres of Excellence.

The monograph is not limited to issues of adequate regulation of artificial intelligence. As the title suggests, the focus is much broader. “We have dealt, among other things, with issues related to online trade, the protection of consumer rights when shopping online, privacy issues, including the implementation of the right to be forgotten, and the area of competition law and its specifics in the digital economy,” Šišková said, adding that she hopes that the published results will be reflected in legislation. (eha)



2024 Magister Optimus: Faculty of Education awarded its best teachers

Six of the twenty-four finalists in the poll for best teacher received the UP Faculty of Education Dean's Award, the 2024 Magister Optimus. On the basis of student nominations, the awards were given to Klára Gyüre from the Department of Czech Language and Literature, Alena Opletalová from the Institute of Education and Social Studies, Kamil Kopecký from the Department of Czech Language and Literature, who is also the head of the national E-Safety project and the head of the Centre for the Prevention of Risky Virtual Communication, Tomáš Hubálek from the Department of Social Sciences, Veronika Růžičková from the Institute of Special Education Studies, and Jana Kořínková from the Institute of Foreign Languages. The Public Award goes to Tereza Buchtová from the Institute of Education and Social Studies.

"I am so happy! With humility and gratitude, I realise that I am allowed to do work

that fulfils me, and that even those around me have publicly appreciated that I do it with all my heart and with quite a high level of commitment. There aren't many public awards in teaching, we just somehow influence our students and maybe years later we accidentally find out about something we did very well in their opinion – or that we may have failed. It warmed my heart to know that my twenty years at the faculty have been perceived so positively that I was selected for the award. I appreciate the nomination by students, I appreciate the award itself, and I am aware that, just like me, a great number of my colleagues are doing their best to educate their future colleagues – high-quality teachers," said Kořínková from the Institute of Foreign Languages, for whom the award is a motivation for further educational work.

Candidates for the 2024 Magister Optimus award were nominated by students of



the UP Faculty of Education. Twenty-four finalists emerged from thirty-five nominations. The final decision on prize winners rested with the dean of the faculty, Vojtech Regec. (map)

Brain bank will contribute to research and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases

To store brain tissue samples donated by patients with neurodegenerative disorders for further research to contribute to the development of treatments for these serious diseases, such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's – this is the main purpose of the Brain Bank of the Department of Neurology and the Department of Clinical and Molecular Pathology at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and University Hospital Olomouc, which was established as only the second official brain bank in the country.

"With the establishment of the official brain bank, we are building on about fifteen years of clinical and pathological activity in brain banking, which our department and the Department of Clinical and Molecular Pathology have been running since 2009, mainly thanks to Prof Kateřina Menšíková and Dr Lucie Tučková, at that time the first ever attempt to do so in the Czech Republic," said Petr Kaňovský, Head of the Department of Neurology. "We were also inspired by a later visit to

the London Neurodegenerative Diseases Brain Bank, where we saw the results of their work in the field of tissue collection and research into neurodegenerative diseases. On our return, we implemented the same system here. This activity of ours is now gaining official status in connection with newly acquired state-of-the-art equipment, which puts us at the level of foremost centres in London, Vienna, Warsaw, and Toronto," added Prof Kaňovský.

The brain bank ensures a standardised procedure for the collection, examination, and storage of biological material, which are essential conditions for successful research in the field of neurodegenerative diseases. Brain banks operate in most countries world-wide. The first official one in the Czech Republic was established at the Thomayer University Hospital in Prague, and the second one now, after years of unofficial operation, is located in Olomouc, both of them already working very closely together. Mutual sharing of research results is very important for improving diagnoses of neurodegenerative diseases and for understanding the basic mechanisms of their development, as well as the development of new drugs in the future. (fri)



Dominik Kusý: Science is more than just a profession to me – it's a passion

This is how evolutionary biologist Dominik Kusý, who works at the Czech Advanced Technology and Research Institute (CATRIN) of Palacký University, describes his work. Although he has only completed his PhD studies this year, he is one of the scientific pillars of the Biodiversity and Molecular Evolution research group and has managed to make a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of beetle evolution.

Namely Coleoptera, a fascinating group of insects with more than 400,000 described species, are his main area of interest. Their extraordinary diversity and ability to adapt to different environments make them an ideal model group for the study of evolution. The young scientist was intrigued by two remarkable evolutionary phenomena: neoteny, which is the preservation of juvenile traits into adulthood, and bioluminescence, i.e. the ability of organisms to produce light.

“My work involves combining modern methods of genome sequencing and bioinformatic analyses with traditional insect systematics and morphological analysis. All this is complemented by field observations. This comprehensive approach allows us to investigate evolutionary processes in great depth. My goal is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolutionary mechanisms and processes that have shaped biodiversity on our planet,” explains the scientist, who has been captivated by nature and modern technology since childhood.

Needless to say, he started researching with great enthusiasm during his studies at Palacký University. To date, he has some 30 publications in prestigious journals with about 400 citations and has received several awards. Together with his colleagues, they have discovered previously unknown relationships between beetle families using the latest phylogenomic methods. And by applying state-of-the-art sequencing technologies, they have made a significant contribution to the identification of beetle bio-

diversity centres in tropical regions, which is crucial for the effective conservation of these unique and species-rich habitats in the time of an ongoing biodiversity crisis.

The key moment in his scientific career, as he claims, was meeting his supervisor Ladislav Bocák during his undergraduate studies at the UP Faculty of Science. “He gave me the freedom, space, and resources to develop my current skills and provided me with valuable experience in beetle systematics and basic molecular methods. Equally valuable were the field expeditions to tropical areas such as Papua New Guinea and Ecuador. These trips provided me not only with indispensable research material but also inspiration for new research questions. As my supervisor used to say, many ideas are born from observations in nature. And he was right. During the expeditions, I witnessed fascinating phenomena that greatly influenced the direction of my research,” Kusý admits. He is also grateful for the opportunity to undertake internships in Germany and Norway during his doctoral studies. These experiences have also significantly shaped his research, in which he wants to continue to confirm the famous line that nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.

What attracts him most about science is the opportunity to conduct basic research that can lead to the discovery of new knowledge. Moreover, every day brings something new. “I value immensely the freedom that science provides. Being able to explore my own research questions, design experiments, and interpret the results is extremely stimulating. I enjoy combining lab and computer work with field research. In addition, I enjoy being able to share my enthusiasm for science with the public, especially young people, through various popularisation activities. I believe that science does not stop in the lab, it has to be shared with the public,” he adds.



Diabetes during pregnancy can lead to blood vessel development disorders in the placenta

Gestational diabetes, which is one of the common complications in pregnancy, should not be taken lightly. According to a study by scientists from the Department of Histology and Embryology at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, who are researching Hofbauer cells in the placenta, it can lead to disorders in the development of blood vessels necessary for foetal nutrition. The results of their work were published in the prestigious journal *Frontiers in Immunology* and presented at an international symposium in the UK as part of an invited lecture.

The placenta ensures the proper growth and development of the foetus. It consists of tissue that belongs partly to the mother and partly to the foetus, and has a unique composition of immune cells. Experts from the Department of Histology and Embryology at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry are mainly focused on the study of Hofbauer cells, the only cells of the immune system of the placenta known to be of foetal origin. These cells were described already by the end of the 19th century, but they have received more attention from experts only in recent years.

“They play an important role in the normal course of pregnancy, contributing to the formation and remodelling of

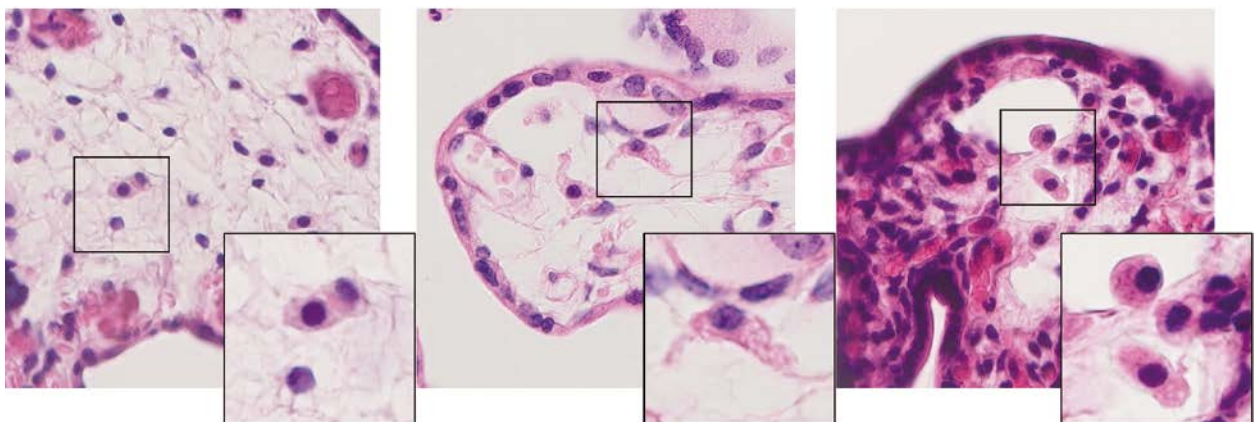
the placenta so that it always provides optimal nutrition for the foetus, and also to the development of immunological tolerance, which provides protection for the foetus against the mother’s immune system. It is becoming apparent that changes in the number and biological behaviour of these cells in relation to pregnancy complications such as pre-eclampsia, placentitis, and diabetes, can lead to premature birth. According to recent research, they can also predict the future incidence of cardiovascular and neuropsychiatric diseases,” said Zdeněk Tauber, head of the department.

Together with their colleagues, they have now added another piece of knowledge on placental Hofbauer cells. In a study published in *Frontiers in Immunology* they looked at changes in these cells in patients with type 1 diabetes and gestational diabetes. The latter is a common complication in pregnancy and is primarily treated by adjusting the diet before and after birth.

“While in type 1 diabetes we have seen quite significant inflammatory activation of Hofbauer cells, which increases the risk of preterm birth, in gestational diabetes there are only minimal changes in the number and shape of the cells. However, we were surprised by the large imbalance

between the produced enzymes that metabolise anti-inflammatory molecules and those that degrade them. This imbalance can lead to disturbances in the growth of blood vessels and the malfunctioning of the placenta,” the head of the department explained, adding that they were the first in the world to make this discovery. “Although this is preliminary data and we’ll need to further study this issue, we must say that gestational diabetes should not be underestimated,” he noted.

Not only these latest findings of the Olomouc experts were presented by study co-author Kateřina Čížková at the 15th International Symposium of Clinical and Applied Anatomy in the UK. “It was a great honour and prestige for me to present, as an invited speaker, the results of our work at this international meeting, where the top experts in morphological disciplines from sixteen countries convened. Our presentation met with a very positive response. I was particularly pleased with the reaction of a professor from Japan, who praised the interesting topic, but also highlighted the fact that our work clearly bridges the gap between basic research and potential therapeutic applications. The mere fact that we were invited confirms that our work is very meaningful,” concluded Čížková.



Hofbauer cells differ, among other things, in their shape: in a normal placenta (left), with type 1 diabetes (middle), and gestational diabetes. In type 1 diabetes they are elongated and often irregular, whereas in gestational diabetes they are very round.

Atomic antibiotics counter bacterial resistance

Scientists from Palacký University Olomouc and the Technical University of Ostrava (VSB-TUO), in collaboration with colleagues from China, have discovered a new generation of antibiotics that not only combat a wide range of bacteria but also effectively prevent the development of bacterial resistance. Since the method of atomic engineering was used in their preparation, the antibiotics with a completely new mechanism of action were given the adjective “atomic”. The discovery has been published in the prestigious journal *Advanced Materials*, and the team has filed a European patent to protect their innovation.

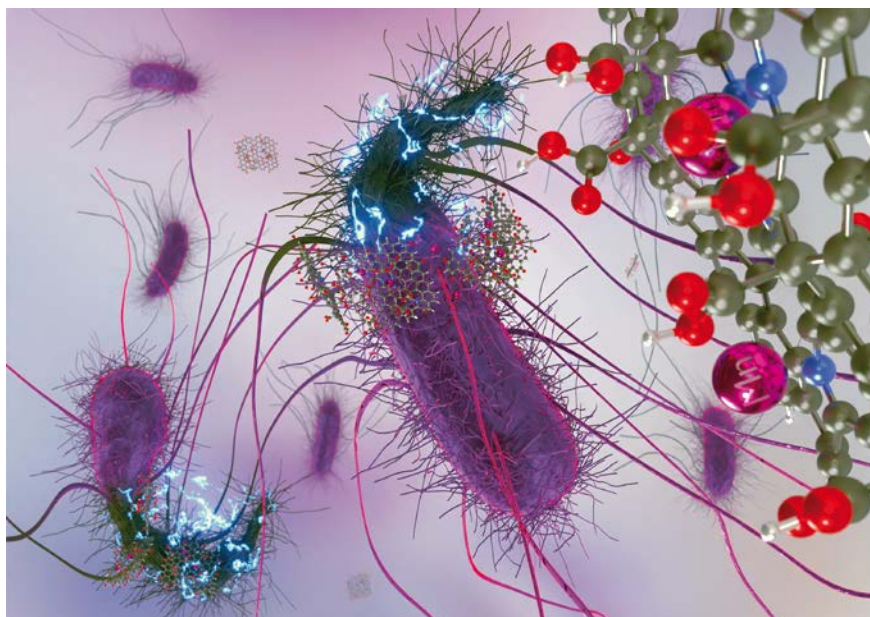
“The material we developed successfully kills and inhibits the growth of all bacteria we studied, including highly resistant pathogens. It operates at low concentrations, which are completely harmless to human cells. Furthermore, bacteria cannot develop resistance to it, thus addressing one of modern medicine’s most pressing challenges. These promising results

position atomic antibiotics for practical use,” said Radek Zbořil, a physical chemist and author of the research concept, who works at the Czech Advanced Technology and Research Institute (UP CATRIN) and VSB-TUO. Colleagues from the UP Faculties of Medicine & Dentistry and Science also contributed.

Scientists turned manganese, a trace element essential for the human body, into an effective antibiotic by incorporating it in the structure of chemically modified graphene using atomic engineering. “We chose to target not the weakest but one of the strongest defences of bacteria – the polysaccharides in their cell walls and membranes crucial for their survival. By chemically binding manganese to specific polysaccharide groups, we suppressed these critical functions, ultimately causing cell death. The graphene carrier plays an essential role by ensuring the delivery of manganese ions to the bacterial surface, which enables a direct chemical attack on the polysaccharide

molecules,” David Panáček, the first author of the article, explained.

Tests in animal models have shown that the new material has great potential, especially in local therapies such as wound healing. “In in-vivo tests, skin infections caused by resistant strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* healed very quickly and effectively, with all markers of inflammation significantly reduced. We are now considering its use for wound dressings or antibacterial treatments on surfaces of artificial materials. We see tremendous potential in preventing bacterial biofilms from forming on devices such as artificial joint replacements, stents, and canulas. Given its mode of action, this new material could also help prevent secondary infections, which would have a major impact on healthcare,” said Milan Kolář, a microbiologist and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at Palacký University Olomouc, who played a key role in the research.



According to the United Nations, if bacterial resistance continues to rise at its current pace, by 2050 untreatable infections caused by multidrug-resistant bacteria could become the leading cause of death worldwide. These “superbugs” pose a global threat, necessitating the development of new antibacterial agents that can bypass the defence mechanisms bacteria use to protect themselves.

text: Martin Višňa
photos: Vojtěch Duda

portrait



Jakub Jurka

UP fencer, Olympic bronze medallist:

**You can feel special, but you still
need to have your feet on the ground**



Rector Martin Procházka personally congratulated Jakub Jurka after his triumphal return from Paris.

Jakub Jurka (b. 1999)

Professional fencer – épéist, member of the Olomouc Dukla Fencing Club and the Czech national team. Several-time Czech champion, junior European champion, winner of the Junior World Championship, medallist in the Cadet World Championships, two-time Olympic Games competitor, and most of all, member of the bronze medal-winning team of épéists at the 2024 Paris Olympics. He studies in two programmes at the UP Faculty of Physical Culture: Coaching and Sport – Leisure Time Pedagogy, and Sports Specialist – Dual Career of Top Athletes; he also studied Information Science at the UP Faculty of Science, but quit the programme due to time constraints.

They used to ask disbelievingly at the start of his sporting career, exactly what it is he does and if he wasn't fibbing about his world travels. He was not pleased with such questions. He was not making up stories, and in time, the doubters caught on that Jakub Jurka fences with an épée and he certainly has nothing to be ashamed of. Recently this Olomouc athlete and student of the UP Faculty of Physical Culture (FPC) made a believer out of everyone at the Olympic Games in Paris, where he successfully closed the Czechs' victory over the French home team for the bronze medal.

"My first match, against an Italian, was already the turning point for me. I had to beat him by a lot, being fully aware that as a team, we had lost against Italy, the reigning world champions, in past seasons. But in Paris, we did it, we beat them. From that time on, we knew that we could win a medal," he said, recalling the success at the Olympics.

A member of the Olomouc Dukla Fencing Club, these were already his second Olympic Games. Three years before, he made it to the individuals competition in Tokyo, and in Paris he was one of four épéists. "Jurka the Hero" the headlines had it when, thanks to his performance, the team, in a close match against the French

in their capital city, won the first Czech medal in the 2024 Olympics.

"I didn't think that many people were following our progress. But after I got back, I probably didn't meet a single person who hadn't heard of us. It's the biggest media following we fencers have ever had. Which of course also means that I have to be careful about what I say. On one hand, I try to be that hero they talk about, but on the other hand I have to behave humbly. You can feel special, but it's good to keep your feet on the ground and realise that there is still a road ahead of you which you need to tread," says the fencer, whose thoughts are now on the next Olympiad. "It's yet another challenge. I'd like to qualify as an individual, but it would also be great to get there as a team. Another four hard years of determination, discipline, and stress."

Jakub Jurka has been fencing since childhood – he didn't have a choice. His grandpa Jaroslav fenced twice in the Olympics and was #2 in the world, and his dad Tomáš became Jakub's and his siblings' trainer. "If it hadn't been fencing, it would have been judo. It's hard work, you've got to dig in and use your body to its utmost. I reckon I have the agility and strength. I tried track & field and swimming – these are part of my normal training. And a few years ago, I went

in for boxing and kick-boxing,” says the two-metre tall épéist, who is impressed by fencing due to its special qualities, working with emotions, and also its friendly and inspiring community.

On the other hand, there is some pain on the piste. “The more refined a technique and style a person has, the more it’s just a smooth stroke, sometimes I don’t even know that I’ve been hit. But when we train with children, then it can actually be quite a stab,” he says, laughing. The psychological strain is apparently even worse; often-times, it only goes away once one leaves the piste.

Jurka considers a moment ten years ago to be the milestone for him. His parents were divorced, the family budget was tight, and it wasn’t possible for all three brothers to continue competing. “Dad sat down with us and said that we were going to go on our last two big events, the European Championships in Israel, and the World Championships in Tashkent, and then we’d see which one of us will be able

to keep fencing on the international level. We didn’t do too well in the Europeans, but in Tashkent I took the silver in the under-18 category – and I was only 14. That was when they wanted me to represent the Czech Republic, and soon I signed my first professional contract.” Coincidentally, his sister Hana has just signed her first contract this year. She is inspired by her older brothers, particularly by Jakub, who started rising in the ranks by winning the Czech championships and then became the junior champion of Europe.

In addition to his sport, he also dedicates himself to his university studies. If he hadn’t reached the Olympic Games in Paris, he probably would have already had his BSc from UP FPC. “I had to risk it and cut myself off from everything else in order to prepare myself for the Games. I take my studies very seriously, although I don’t have so much time for them. I’m very grateful for all the support which FPC and the national Victoria VSC university sports centre give to their athletes,” says Jurka.



In ten years’ time, he would be happy to be preparing for his fifth and final Olympiad, but he would also like to have the title MSc behind his name, and secure conditions to devote himself to the future of his home club. “When it comes to fencing, I believe my dad, that it is possible to triple or quadruple the number of fencers in the country, and there will be another team capable of winning an Olympic medal. But of course, I’d like it to be mine.”

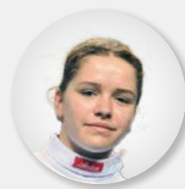
“If it hadn’t been fencing, it would have been judo. It’s hard work, you’ve got to dig in and use your body to its utmost.”



Jiří Beran Jr.
fencer, fellow Olympic team member

I’ve had my eye on Jakub ever since he was a lad and began to stand out. I liked how he really made an effort, even outside of training hours. Jakub has always known that his place is on the piste. He’s not a fan of failure, nor of matches when there isn’t a lot at stake. But in critical situations, when most people would get a case of nerves or even break down, he’s incredibly strong. I like his directness, he says everything he thinks and doesn’t mince words. I’ve always enjoyed fencing with him, because I could feel that he really wanted to beat the hell out of me, both at tourneys and in practice.

I enjoyed that.



Hana Jurková
fencer,
Jakub’s sister

My brother Jakub is someone I can always turn to, and he helps me with anything from schoolwork to fencing. He inspires me in both fencing and in life. I’d like to be as good as he is some day. I grew up with him, and whenever we went with our dad to a competition, Jakub would come back with a trophy, usually first place. I didn’t really understand at the time how difficult it is to make your mark in foreign competitions, but now I realise that for Dad as his trainer and for Jakub himself, it must have been awesome.

Student athletes

Fencer Jakub Jurka, whose portrait you may have just read on these pages, is not the only Palacký University student who has recently excelled in sports. In fact, four other UP students represented their countries at the Olympic Games in Paris; **rowers Radka Novotníková** and **Miroslav Vraštil** after their return finished their studies and became proud graduates. On these facing pages, we offer vignettes of other talented athletes who manage to study at UP despite their demanding athletic training and competition programmes and about whom we're likely to hear a whole lot more.

Renata Zachová | European judo champion

Olomouc judoka and Faculty of Physical Culture (FPC) student Renata Zachová is the first Czech woman to become senior champion of Europe, in the up to 63 kg category. She was also able to fight her way into the Paris Olympic Games. "Winning the European championship was amazing. And the Olympics? A true milestone in my judo career. I'm glad that I could 'tick that box', but I'll fight for the medal next time. Right now I'm focusing on my Bachelor's exams. Balancing studies is hard for me, I have 2–3 training sessions a day, and in between I have to study. But the uni is accommodating, and I'm grateful for that," said the pupil of Jiří Štěpán from Judo Club Olomouc.



Zuzana Hrašková | Top Slovak finswimmer

FPC student Zuzana Hrašková is currently the top finswimmer in Slovakia. She won three silver medals at this year's world university championships, and she has swum her way three times into the non-academic world championship finals, one time just missing out on a medal by a hair. "My goal at the world championships was to qualify for the next World Games in the 100-metre BiFins, but I didn't make it," the swimmer says. She decided to study in Olomouc because of swimming, for during Covid, the pools were closed for a long time in Slovakia. "I don't regret my decision at all, and I never thought it would be so much fun – I will remember my courses and fellow students forever."



Monika Macháčová | Silver in handball

Monika Macháčová, who studies International Relations & Safety and English at the UP Faculty of Arts, is representing DHK Zora Olomouc for her eleventh season. Handball players from this club make up the core of UP's representatives, who won a silver medal at the European Universities Games. Monika Macháčová was named Most Valuable Player at the games. "Our loss in the finals was disappointing, because we almost got the gold, but we soon got over it. The award means a lot to me, I like making the plays and helping the team. On the other hand, it's not so important, because handball is not about individual awards," she says, adding that she doesn't see any tension between sport and studies, for the two opposing worlds provide a kind of balance to life.





Adam Li | Olympic archer

Archer Adam Li, a member of the UP archery team studying the FPC programme Sports Specialist – Dual Career of Top Athletes, like Renata Zachová also experienced his first Olympic Games in Paris. “At first, it was just another competition for me. During the Games, however, thanks to the enormous media attention, I realised that this is something special and important. Although I was not able to zero in on a medal, I am satisfied with my performance. I did my best. And it is important to say that thanks to the media interest in archery, it has increased its popularity – even here in Olomouc,” added the athlete, who recently came in 9th at Veronica’s Cup in Slovenia, 7th place in mixed teams at the Archery World Cup, and is currently the top-ranked Czech archer.

Martina Dvořáková | Record-breaking fire-fighting athlete

The Czech championship in fire-fighting sport, which took place in Olomouc, was marked by several national records. The women’s 4 x 100m obstacle relay race was one, and UP Faculty of Health Sciences student Martina Dvořáková was in that team. “We have firefighters in our family, so this is something I grew up with. I started with firefighting strike, then three years ago I added fire tower climb, and this year I added the 100 m obstacle course. I’m glad we were able to break the national record right here in Olomouc,” said the athlete, who took 5th place in the fire tower climb, missing out on the final by only tenths of a second. She took 3rd place in the fire tower climb at the academic championships.



Martina Mazurová | Silver in the shotput

Olomouc athlete Martina Mazurová hurled the shot 16.38 metres at the World Athletics Junior U20 Championships, enough to earn her the silver medal. Almost as soon as she accepted congratulations on her success at her home stadium, she headed to the Theoretical Institutes of the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. There she started studies in General Medicine, inspired by her family – especially her grandmother. “She’s a surgeon, and I always liked her work attitude, her passion to help people, and the happiness it has brought her. I wanted to experience something similar. But I didn’t want to completely follow in grandma’s footsteps and become a surgeon. Right now, what is important for me is managing everything including studying. I’m confident I’ll be able to cope.”

And more...

Also connected to Palacký University are biathlete **Jakub Štvrtecký**, who won the Summer Biathlon World Championships; or **Lucie Doležalová**, a student of General Nursing, who although considering ending her athletic career, still went to the IRF World Rafting Championships as a back-up and came back with several medals, including a gold. **Filip Látal** won gold and a world record at the FISU World University Championship Finswimming, swimmer **Barbora Janíčková** won a silver at the European Aquatics Championships, and **Karolína Bayerová** – Slovak Under-19 Football Player of the Year – also studies in Olomouc. And we could go on....

success



Palacký University has eight new professors

At the ceremony when new professors received their appointment decrees in the middle of the year in the Carolinum in Prague, experts working at Palacký University Olomouc were among them. “Teach your students to keep learning throughout their lives. This way, you can be great examples for them,” said Petr Pavel, President of the Czech Republic, in a brief speech, as he handed over the decrees to the new appointees.

Three medical doctors and members of the academic community of the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry achieved this highest academic degree. Surgeon Dušan Klos, who is currently the vice-dean of the faculty, has expertise in the challenging treatment of peritoneal carcinomatosis, an

advanced cancer in the abdominal cavity. The interventional treatment of heart rhythm disorders by catheter ablations is the focus of Tomáš Skála from the First Department of Internal Medicine – Cardiology. The specialisation of pulmonologist Milan Sova is, among others, obstructive sleep apnoea syndrome and post-Covid syndrome.

Three professorships were awarded to the UP Faculty of Arts. While Ludmila Veselovská from the Department of English and American Studies is an internationally respected linguist, Alla Arkhanshelska is building and deepening relations with Ukrainian universities and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and promoting Ukrainian Studies as an integral part of Olomouc Slavic Studies. Ondřej

Jakubec from the Department of Art History specialises in architecture and visual culture of the early modern era as well as artistic patronage of the same period.

New professors emerged from the academic community at the UP Faculty of Science, too. Jan Soubusta works in the Joint Laboratory of Optics at UP FS and the Institute of Physics of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and during his scientific career he has worked in the fields of optoelectronics, classical optics, and most currently quantum optics, investigating the interaction of individual photons. Zhiworad Tomovski has also been appointed a professor; he is this year’s new addition to the Department of Mathematical Analysis and Applications of Mathematics. (vim)

New graphene-based sensor enhances temperature monitoring reliability

Scientists from Palacký University’s CATRIN, in collaboration with the University of West Bohemia and VSB-TUO, have developed an innovative sensor capable of accurately measuring temperatures be-

tween 10 and 90 degrees Celsius. The sensor utilises a novel graphene derivative, thus standing out for its high precision, reliability, and resistance to humidity. Its applications range from industrial production and storage areas requiring remote temperature monitoring to integration into protective clothing.

“We developed the new material using fluorographene chemistry by removing fluorine atoms and attaching benzylamine to the available reactive sites. This proved to be a crucial step in creating the temperature sensor. This technology allowed us to significantly minimise the adverse effects of humidity, typically the most challenging issue for such devices,” explained Petr Jakubec from CATRIN, co-author of the study published in the prestigious journal *Advanced Electronic Materials*.

The new sensor offers significant advantages over traditional sensors, primarily

due to its high accuracy. It exhibits temperature resistivity that is twice as high as that of conventional platinum thermometers. A common issue with temperature sensors is their varying responses to changes in relative humidity. As a result, they often need to be wrapped in an insulating layer, which however reduces their response rate. “Our material is stable and insensitive to humidity, allowing it to function in direct contact with the environment. This means it can measure temperature more accurately and quickly, better meeting the needs of modern industry,” stated team leader Michal Otyepka. The sensor can be produced using inexpensive rapid printing technologies.

Temperature monitoring and regulation are essential in various environments, including industrial, residential, and storage settings. Consequently, the demand for affordable, efficient, and durable temperature sensors is on the rise. (srd)



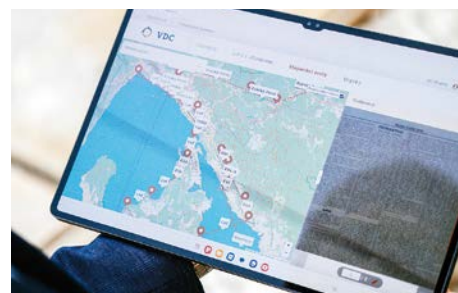
DIGEOCAT & Lib: A digital tool for more efficient research of travelogues

Researchers from Palacký University in collaboration with teams from three foreign universities and other partners will make accessible a unique multi-thematic atlas – DIGEOCAT & Lib. The atlas will include travelogues of Czech provenance whose authors travelled to the Mediterranean region between the 15th century and 1918.

The programme aims to facilitate the work of researchers and students and may also be of interest to travellers and tourists. “This project’s main goal is to develop and implement a prototype software application for more effective research of Czech travel texts from the Mediterranean region from the 15th century to 1918. This digital tool will allow researchers to record the routes of travellers or travelogues on digital maps and at the same time link individual locations to the created digital library of travel texts through a matrix of key themes focused on mapping intercultural contact. The online application will be operated by the Moravian Library in Brno. Its users will be able to quickly obtain in-

formation on intercultural contact from travel texts through structured questions and map visualisations,” said Jiří Hrabal, the project’s principal investigator from the Department of Czech Studies at the UP Faculty of Arts. His team is also using ancient maps, as some places from the recorded routes are hard to trace on contemporary ones.

The multimedia online atlas is supposed to be finished by the end of 2025. It will be a digital library of travelogues available online, interactively linked to the digital multi-thematic atlas through themes focused on intercultural contact. The Moravian Library in Brno is providing a team of experts for the digitisation of old literary texts, including technical support. Important partners are researchers from three foreign universities: the University of Udine, the University of Granada, and the University of Zagreb. A major partner is the Department of Geoinformatics at the UP Faculty of Science, whose experts are working on the programming of the atlas. (map)



Prestigious ERC grant goes to Olomouc: Support for research into plant morphogenesis

Prof Ondřej Novák from the Laboratory of Growth Regulators, a joint workplace of Palacký University Olomouc Faculty of Science and the Institute of Experimental Botany at the Czech Academy of Sciences, has succeeded in a demanding international competition and won one of the most prestigious scientific grants of the European Research Council (ERC). His STAR-

MORPH project is focused on research into the role of the plant hormone auxin in plant growth and shaping. Over the next six years, Prof Novák will be working on the project together with project coordinator Stéphanie Robert from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Jürgen Kleine-Vehn from the University of Freiburg, and Alexander Jones from the University of Cambridge.

Scientists in the STARMORPH project are using thale cress as the model plant to study the development of its apical hook, which plays a key role in the plant’s further growth and development after germinating from seed. The apical hook is the curved part of the stem near the top of the plant that allows the plant to emerge safely through the soil. The hook is formed by suppressing cell growth on the inside of the emerging stem. As soon as the seedling penetrates the soil to the surface, the cells on the inside start to elongate again and the hook unfurls. The phyto-

hormone auxin plays a major role in differential growth, when different parts of plant organs grow at different rates. “Our research should reveal how the phytohormone auxin, mechanical signals, and developmental programmes interact together at multiple levels. The project introduces the concept of an ‘auxin signature’ which involves the dynamics of auxin within the plant cell in response to mechanical signals,” said Prof Novák.

The project will use an interdisciplinary approach combining plant physiology, cell biology, genetics, biophysics, synthetic biology, and bioanalytical chemistry. Scientific teams will work together to investigate the changes in auxin distribution and concentration. “We will develop new chemical and bioengineering methods to map auxin inside cells and monitor its dynamics over time and space. Using genetics and biochemical methods, we will study in detail the mechanical properties of the cell wall and its influence on plant growth,” added Novák.



Thank you for helping. UP Rector praised volunteers' work

UP Rector Martin Procházka presented ten individual and one collective award to volunteers from Palacký University who dedicate their free time and energy to their surroundings and other people, whether providing aid to refugees fleeing war, selling decorations for the benefit of hospitalised child patients, or supporting the student community. The award ceremony was part of the MEET UP festival that UP hosted to mark the start of the academic year.

To name but a few, the prize was awarded to Ondřej Němčák from the UP Project Service, who is actively involved in a number of volunteer challenges at the university and, among other things, returned from the flood-affected Jeseník region shortly before the award ceremony, or Klára Bajtová, chairwoman of the KOS student association from the Faculty of Education. "I was surprised, very pleased, maybe even a little moved, but it definitely kick-started

me into further activities. I am very fond of association activities, I'd love to do as many events as possible for students from all faculties with my colleagues," she said.

Alexandr Zarivnij, who visits patients in the oncology ward, was also taken by surprise. "I didn't know I could even get an award for this. The impetus for me was my grandmother, who successfully battled cancer twice. She lived to the beautiful age of 77, but at the end she faced a haemato-oncology diagnosis. I accompanied her on her last journey, we spent time together, she was very grateful – and I realised that others could experience the same last journey," the medical student revealed.

The collective prize was awarded to representatives of the UP Crowd association from the UP Faculty of Science for their long-term support of the community, active involvement in university events, and science popularisation.

"In today's demanding times, when we are so busy working or studying, one of the most precious commodities is time. And if someone is willing to devote their free time and energy for the benefit of others, I think it is worth appreciating such activity," said Rector Procházka in closing. (vim)



Aurora's open call: UP receives support for projects, summer schools, and mobilities

The first open call aimed at fostering international scientific and academic collaboration, research mobilities, and thematic summer schools, was very much welcomed across the Aurora network. UP is the coordinator of one of the seven supported projects and participates in two others as a partner. It will also participate in the organisation of a summer school and will send two students for research mobilities at partner institutions. Aurora brings together nine European universities, and the current president of this network is UP Rector Martin Procházka.

"In the first year of the call, 26 eligible projects were submitted. These were subsequently evaluated by the Aurora Research Council, to which scientists from

each of Aurora's partner universities across the disciplinary spectrum were appointed. The results were then approved by Aurora's Vice-Rectors for Research. Based on the evaluation by both bodies, seven projects were awarded support totalling €104,000; Palacký University Olomouc is represented in three of them," says Marie Jadrníčková, Aurora Research Officer at UP.

As the coordinator, UP was successful with the NUTRIAGE24 project. Its principal investigator, Romana Klášterecká from the UP Faculty of Health Sciences, will work with colleagues from Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Spain and the University of Iceland to address the issue of healthy ageing. UP is also a partner in two other funded projects. The ETHICAL pro-

ject involves Lucie Macková from the UP Faculty of Science. The main objective is to develop a comprehensive model that captures migration flows within the European Union. Then the VALOR-LIGHT project deals with the adverse impacts on herbal products and extracts due to the use of fertilisers and pesticides in the cultivation of medicinal plants. Lukáš Spíchal, Head of CATRIN-CRH, will participate on behalf of UP.

The call also supported international cooperation in organising summer schools. The CIRAGRO summer school, co-organised by the Department of Biochemistry at the UP Faculty of Science, will focus on the circular economy in the agro-industrial sector. (mz)

Project on children's palliative care succeeded in the call of the Vlček Family Foundation

The UP Faculty of Health Sciences will expand its range of courses on palliative care. The project implementing paediatric palliative care into teaching, involving the Department of Nursing and the Department of Midwifery, has succeeded in the grant call of the Vlčková Family Foundation.

The main aim of the open call "School – the Foundation of Care" is to deepen the education of academics in children's palliative care (CPC) and to support its introduction into curricula and teaching at higher education institutions across disciplines. Both institutes decided to participate in this call because they recognise the importance of CPC and its inclusion in educational programmes. "Our students are exposed to long-term sick children and their families. Therefore, it is imperative that our students know what needs these children and

their families have. They also need to know how to communicate properly in this situation and how to look after the patients and their families," said Lenka Štureková, the project coordinator.

Currently, the Faculty of Health Sciences offers only one course dealing with CPC and two courses on palliative care for adults. "The approved project primarily focuses on increasing the competence of academic staff in paediatric palliative care by completing several training courses. This knowledge will be then implemented in the three courses already underway in the Department of Nursing, as well as in new courses, two of which will be created in the Department of Midwifery and one in the Department of Nursing. At the same time, our goal is to increase the availability of literature on this issue," Štureková explained.



Students who complete the courses will gain valuable and necessary information that will subsequently help them in clinical practice in improving the quality of life of families with a long-term sick child. (dkr)

Student Janis Bojko wins prestigious European Chemical Society Award

The European Chemical Society (EuChemS) award for the best chemistry project in the European Union Contest for Young Scientist (EUCYS), which took place in Katowice, Poland, went to Janis Bojko, a student of the UP Faculty of Science. In the competition of 146 participants

under 20 years of age, he succeeded with his paper "Synthesis of new selective-dual inhibitors of cyclin-dependent kinases".

"It was a huge honour just to be a part of this great contest. The main goal for me was to enjoy the whole event. I met many wonderful people from all over the world who made the whole competition worthwhile. It was absolutely impossible to compare the projects with one another, even in the same category, because each project issue was diametrically different from the other," Bojko said.

The student of Bioorganic Chemistry and Biochemistry has been working on the synthesis of compounds with anticancer activity in the research group of Petr Cankar from the Department of Organic Chemistry for a long time. "Simply put, this is a study investigating the biological activity of new potential anticancer drugs against acute myeloid leukaemia (AML). I investigated the synthesis of these compounds.

A big thank you goes to all the colleagues with whom I worked," Bojko noted.

The talented student joined Petr Cankar's research group already in 2021, while studying at the František Živný Gymnasium in Bohumín. "I have known Janis since the very beginning, when he came to our department as part of the Badatel (Researcher) project. It is obvious that he enjoys organic chemistry immensely. He is proactive and, in addition to studies, he actively seeks out short-term internships at various research institutions and commercial companies. We are now trying to prepare CDK2 inhibitors, on which we are collaborating with colleagues from the Department of Experimental Biology at the Faculty of Science and the Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Czech Academy of Sciences. The fact that he succeeded in the EUCYS international competition made us very happy at the department," Cankar added. (cho)



Eliška Zgarbová: It's important for us as scientists to simply explain what we do

To communicate complicated things in an understandable way is not easy. Especially when it comes to science. The recent graduate of the UP Faculty of Science – and UP Endowment Fund scholarship recipient – Eliška Zgarbová, who also took third place in the national round of the international FameLab competition, knows this well. The latter's jury lauded her project "Farmers' Market: Freshly Grown Human Intestine", focused on organoid technology, via which one can do research into intestinal inflammation. Organoids are miniaturised and simplified versions of organs grown under laboratory conditions which realistically mimic microanatomy.

— How difficult is it to explain a scientific project within FameLab's three-minute time limit?

The regulation time limit was definitely the toughest part. Three minutes is not so much time to describe the scientific problem one is working on in detail. My first draft took almost double that time. I also used a lot of technical jargon. But ultimately, I was able to simplify the description of my results and still get the idea across. But the main thing is so that listeners to my presentation can understand not only what I do in the lab, but also why it is important, and in what way my research might have an impact on their own lives.

— What was your motivating force?

My biggest motivation was "to get outside my comfort zone" and to overcome my

weaknesses. Just a few months ago I would never have guessed that I would even enter the contest. Forget about making it into the national finals and then winning third place. You could say that I wanted to challenge myself and push past my own limits. The format of the competition is completely different than the style in which I normally present my research results. I always wanted to improve my science communication, to work on my presentation skills and body language. Because when I usually present, I wave my arms around like a helicopter and pace back and forth like a duck. Finalists were treated to a certified MasterClass course run by experienced presenters who were able to better prepare me.

— Why is popularising science important?

I think it is very important for us as scientists to be able to simply and humanly explain what we do and what we study to the widest possible audience – from experts to my friends and family to the general public. Especially for those who have never been inside a laboratory – for them it is difficult to even imagine what that kind of research looks like. To my mind, one of the goals of popularisation is to evoke the audience's interest in scientific disciplines. Science is everywhere, and if we want those around us to understand what it is we are doing in the lab, it is necessary to know how to explain it properly and succinctly. Which can be difficult.



Eliška Zgarbová (b. 1994)

She first studied Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering at the UP Faculty of Science; in her doctoral programme she studied Molecular and Cellular Biology, specifically the impact of indoles activating the aryl hydrocarbon receptor (AhR) on prostate cancer cell lines. In 2023 she won the 20th annual Faculty of Science Dean's Prize competition against nearly 100 other competitors.

FameLab

A "stand-up" scientific competition, sponsored by the British Council in the Czech Republic since 2011. The contest originated in England and the goal is to find new talents in the area of science popularisation. Nine competitors made it into this year's national finals. Each had three minutes to explain their scientific research to the jury and audience without the help of audiovisual aids.



text: Šárka Chovancová
photos: Katrin Stark

Marie Pražáková: I take science popularisation contests as a challenge

She is a doctoral student in Inorganic Chemistry at the UP Faculty of Science, and a UP Endowment Fund scholarship recipient. In addition to her professional career, Marie Pražáková is also actively involved in science popularisation. She won third prize in the Czech finals of the international Falling Walls Lab competition, and also its Audience Award.

“I am very happy that I could present my scientific work in the finals and very briefly introduce one of the newer projects I am working on to the public. It focuses on theranostics containing manganese, where I combine a potential contrast agent (containing manganese) and a cytostatic containing another metal, such as platinum (to destroy cancer cells). I still cannot believe that the jury and the audience liked the presentation so much that I won third place and the Audience Award,” said Pražáková.

The Faculty of Science student was a 2020 UP Endowment Fund scholarship recipient and won the EF board’s trust: the EF supported her projects again in

2022 and 2024. She also took part in the French Ma thèse en 180 secondes contest and the national finals of the international FameLab competition. She was able to captivate a wide audience again in the Falling Walls Lab competition.

“It is not easy to leave your comfort zone. I knew that there were some flaws in my way of presentation and that I get stressed when speaking in front of the public. I wanted to project more self-confidence, to learn how to explain my work as if to my parents, and to avoid chemical jargon, otherwise nobody would understand me. At the same time, I’m pretty stubborn, and I welcome challenges. When I heard there was an opportunity to apply to a contest focused on science communication, I jumped at the chance,” the doctoral student revealed.

Marie Pražáková is also a graduate of the UP Leadership Matters! programme. She is regularly involved in other university activities such as Open Days, the UP Science Fair, the Long Night of the Sciences, and educational events at the UP Ca-



reer Centre and the UP Endowment Fund. “Popularising science is necessary in order for non-scientists to understand why scientists and their projects are important. Science communication needs to be comprehensible in order to relate the future possibilities of scientific progress to the public, plus how the work of scientists will benefit them personally and why it makes sense to support science more,” she added.



Among the ten national finalists was also Riccardo Fusco, a student at the Institute of Molecular and Translational Medicine at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry who works in the Innovative Chemistry research group at UP CATRIN.

Falling Walls Lab

The Falling Walls Lab international competition was held under the auspices of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Czech Republic, and the Czech National Technical Library for the ninth time. The competition is intended for students, young scientists, and innovators who present their research projects, business plans, or civic initiatives in English to an audience and expert jury.



personality

text: Martin Višňa
photos: Jakub Čermák

Archbishop Josef Nuzík: I'm pleased how the Faculty of Theology is evolving

This faculty is divine! The UP Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology has been operating under this motto for several years now, and not just to attract applicants. While on one hand the expression describes the interesting modern study programmes and the activities of the academic community, the actual divinity of the faculty is ensured by Olomouc Archbishop Josef Nuzík, in the position of Grand Chancellor.

The Grand Chancellor is the guarantor of the faculty from the ecclesiastical side, and also its go-between with the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome. "My main task is to coordinate and to ensure that the faculty does not lose its spiritual dimension, that the instruction given by the faculty is not 'About God without God'," Nuzík explains. "Specifically, that means for example that we start the academic year with a community prayer, we pray that the time which the teachers and students spend together will bear good fruit. We start and finish the academic year with a prayer. The Dean confesses his faith to the Grand Chancellor, and the department heads must introduce the new teachers to him, especially those in theological fields. Furthermore, the Grand Chancellor

is a permanent member of the faculty's Academic Board."

The Grand Chancellor's word is law at the faculty. For example, if a candidate is presented to him who has opinions straying from Catholic doctrine, the Grand Chancellor has the right – even the responsibility – to veto, not to allow them into the canonical mission. And in the event of complaints, these go to the Grand Chancellor, too.

However, Archbishop Nuzík is pleased with the way the faculty has been evolving. "I really appreciate everything it has been able to accomplish. For example, I like the online Theology programme, a modern way of teaching which the market lacked – which has attracted a wide range of interested applicants. We also have a Department of Christian Social Work and a quite interesting Department of Communication. This shows that the Faculty of Theology rounds out several academic disciplines within the university as a whole, and as I see it, gives the disciplines a soul," he says, adding that the faculty also has an important position within the archdiocese.

"Every institution, in order to be not only modern but also alive and well, needs an instructional foundation. And the Faculty of

Theology represents the faith to people in a communicable form; I see it as an invaluable servant for us bishops. Plus, I often take advantage of the experience and knowledge of the faculty's experts," the archbishop explains.

He has more connections to the Olomouc Faculty of Theology than only as its Grand Chancellor. He is also an alumnus. He began to prepare for the priesthood in Autumn 1989 at what was then the only theological faculty in the country, in Litoměřice, Bohemia – but thanks to the Velvet Revolution, after a year he was able to transfer to the newly reopened Faculty of Theology in Olomouc, which as a Moravian native he welcomed. "I remember that time fondly. Suddenly we were a fully-fledged component of the university, we were accepted among the students of the other faculties, we could have an academic title attached to our names. I am glad that UP welcomed the Faculty of Theology into its arms and I believe that this was thanks to the personalities of my preceding archbishops and also the individual rectors who understood that the university would only be complete once one of its components was Divinity," Nuzík says, in closing.

text: Ivana Pustějovská
photos: UP VC, Vojtěch Duda

volunteering

We brought help where floods brought destruction

We are helping. Although we're a university, with teaching and research in first place, we also do not neglect the world we're part of. When a tornado ripped through South Moravia, when the country was crippled by Covid, when Ukraine was invaded and thousands of refugees needed to be taken care of, we were there. So when devastating floods hit the north of the Olomouc and Moravian-Silesian regions, the UP Volunteering Centre, in collaboration with the Olomouc Region and its emergency committee, immediately started mobilising everyone who would be willing to help: students, employees, the public.

Week after week, hundreds of people boarded special buses as well as their own

cars and headed north of Olomouc to help. Other universities joined the command of Olomouc's university as their coordinator, too. Among the first were Prague's Charles University and Czech Technical University and Brno's Masaryk University. All professions and all hands were of use. "In the beginning, we had to map the needs of affected households, which was a task for social workers, who were helped by our social work students. We were also looking for interpreters into Polish. Some of our volunteers helped local crisis intervention workers, such as psychology students who've had crisis intervention courses. Others were available for the crisis managers of the municipalities and helped with on-site

coordination. However, the most needed were those who were involved in cleaning up the damages in various ways. We helped in public spaces as well as in homes, wherever our volunteers were sent by the municipalities' coordinators. We also adjusted the content of Employee Volunteer Day: our colleagues headed to help in the Jeseník region," says Vladimíra Sedláčková, manager of the UP Volunteering Centre. This was one of the most important prerequisites: Keep a cool head and coordinate the work with all involved parties: municipalities, firefighters, and other aid organisations. "Everyone who helped was awesome, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart," adds the manager.



University on the road: Colours of Ostrava

Palacký University is inextricably linked with Olomouc. Sometimes, however, it sets out beyond its region's borders to introduce itself to people from other parts of the country. The aim is not only to show what is possible to study here, where to live, and where to have fun, but also to introduce interesting personalities from its academic ranks. One such extraordinary opportunity to present our alma mater and Olomouc as a university town was provided this year by one of the largest music festivals in the Czech Republic, Colours of Ostrava.

For four days, visitors were able to enjoy a lavish programme in the university Relax & Info Zone as well as a discussion event on the Envision Stage. This one-day debate block was the culmination of the university's presentation in Ostrava. On the stage, five speakers representing five faculties – Petra Gaul Aláčová from the Faculty of Health Sciences, Hynek Melichar from the Faculty of Arts, Ivana Fellnerová from the Faculty of Science, Petr Baďura from the Faculty of Theology, and Michael Kohajda from the Faculty of Law – spoke in front of a packed hall. The five experts spoke on

the topics Breath as the Key to Our Health; European Security in a Dangerous World; Memory, Emotions, Antidepressants, and Drugs: Neurons Are Behind Everything; Lifestyle Data of Czech Teenagers from Alcohol to Zizz; Truth and Alternative Truth from the Perspective of Law. The huge interest of the visitors was also reflected in the discussions with the speakers, which often lasted for an hour after the end of their presentations. The breaks between the sessions were filled by a science show staged by Fort Science, the interactive museum at the UP Faculty of Science.



text: Ivana Pustějovská, Egon Havrlant
photos: Jakub Čermák

interview

A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a dark green dress with a white geometric pattern, stands in a garden. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is filled with green foliage and trees, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Lucie Plíhalová: In science, you mustn't get discouraged by failure



“Curiosity,” she says without pausing to think about the answer to the question what quality is important for a scientist. “And patience,” she adds. She knows what she’s talking about. She has been able to make a name for herself in the world of science. She believed in herself, and even if some things didn’t work out initially, she didn’t get discouraged. Associate Professor at the UP Faculty of Science, Head of the Biochemistry Department, Palacký University Vice-Rector for Science and Research. But above all, a woman who when lecturing on chemistry and biology, can make students immediately see the world through her eyes. How do plants work? Why do they grow and not grow? How do they cope with drought? Do they communicate? And what can we learn from them? Lucie Plíhalová and her world of questions and answers. “I have always been interested in how things work,” she says, remembering that at primary school, she was one of the few who signed up for physics and chemistry clubs. The smell of the labs, how they were mysterious and compelling at the same time.

— Why is science so fascinating for you?

The whole world interests me. Ever since I was little, I’ve been a reader, because I wanted to know how the human body, plants, and animals work. To peek inside and understand all the whys and hows. How things must react chemically together in order to work perfectly and how they can “speak” together. Because a creature such as a person, animal, or plant is a genuine miracle. Plants in particular have always fascinated me. They are very ancient organisms. They have existed in various forms for hundreds of millions of years. They have had lots of time to “think” about how to survive, how to reduce stress. They have had to learn to cope, because unlike

people, they cannot move and relocate to a place with better conditions. They have been able to adapt to temperature changes and water shortages. And in this age of climate changes, we as people must do the same. But we do not handle the stressful situations brought about by long-term fluctuations in weather very well, and extreme heat kills us. Look around you. None of us are completely healthy, we take all kinds of medications and supplements. Adaptation is difficult for us.

— So we can we learn something from plants?

When I teach first-year students in Chemistry for Biology II, there are trees outside the room’s windows. I point to them and say: They’re speaking together, communicating, for instance via ordinary glucose. Students gawk at me in disbelief. I think it’s incredibly important for us to remember that the plants around us are alive, and some of their qualities and abilities could inspire our lives, too. For example, they are able to support each other in times of crises. To understand all the processes operating within any organism, and all the elements inside them tuned in perfect harmony, is actually the goal of chemistry. Biochemistry, my focus, is a cutting-edge, interdisciplinary field. One definition for it is “exploring biological systems via chemical tools”. In other words, we explore the chemical side of what is living. This is actually how I’d prefer to educate students – via an interdisciplinary approach, so that they wouldn’t be “only” chemists or “only” biologists but would perceive the world around them as a whole.

— Your field can have an influence on all our lives, perhaps in raising more resilient crops and thereby preventing humanity from starving. But how does such research look in practice? How do you force a plant to be more resilient?

Lucie Plíhalová (b. 1978)

She graduated with a degree in Inorganic Chemistry from the UP Faculty of Science, where in 2007 she also got her Ph.D. in Chemistry. In 2019 she got her habilitation in Agricultural Chemistry from Mendel University in Brno, who then granted her the title of Associate Professor. She began her career at the UP Faculty of Science as a scientist and teacher; currently she is the Head of the Department of Biochemistry, and since 2022 also UP Vice-Rector for Science and Research. She has cooperated with universities in the USA, Italy, and Lithuania. She focuses on organic synthesis of substances derived from plant hormones and related research into biological mechanisms for use in agriculture, medicine, and the cosmetics industry. She also studies the influence of crop growth regulation on crop yields, quality, and resilience to climate change stresses. She is the co-author of a number of scientific publications, the principal or co-investigator of several Czech Ministry of Education and Czech Science Foundation grants, and is a team member of projects by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic and the Johannes Amos Comenius Programme Excellence in Research project TANGENC: TowArds Next GENERation Crops.

We're taught basic information in bio textbooks, you must be aware of it yourself. For example, when you grow plants in your garden and you want them to thrive, you add nitrogen to support the growth of leaves and stems. You add phosphorus when you want to support root growth and the overall health of the plant, and you add potassium when you want to support blossoming, the ripening of fruit, and increasing the overall resilience against diseases and pests. This is really basic information, but it's enough to produce good harvests. We scientists however have to ask why this is so. Why does a plant "produce" this mass so easily? And so we study the individual phases of development in plants, and we track the substances that "regulate" them. It's fascinating, because while plants may look simple, they are actually quite complex organisms. Just like in the human body, there are thousands of substances which have different regulatory functions. And just a trace amount of tiny chemical molecules can modify plants' development. It's like when you ingest some substance and your heart starts to race. Plants work the same way.

— So the plant is communicating with itself in a way? Should I be imagining some kind of plant soliloquy?

I'd prefer to speak of chemical communication which occurs within the plant. For example, the root should develop in some way so that during a drought, it gets water. Or when somebody brushes by a plant and a piece of it breaks off, it has to do something. Is that *finito* for the shoot, or is the plant able to replace it? The plant is sending signals to itself which are mediated by tiny chemical molecules. This is what we are looking into. We're lucky because we can build upon the great work being done by the Laboratory of Growth Regulators, which is a shared workplace of our faculty and the Institute of Experimental Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences, where our colleagues have been working for many years on the functions of such signalling molecules. Putting it another way, we chemists try to add "something" to these molecules, or take away something, and then observe whether they still function as signalling molecules which communicate the given information or are signalling something else. For example, you want more blossoms, more offshoots, or a higher yield. This is a hot topic these days, because the human population is increasing and to ensure enough food for everyone in the future is not going to be easy. This is a perfect example of where biochemistry comes in.

— What can we laypersons learn from plants?

Perhaps that plants don't have as many options as people do regarding what to ingest. They stand in one place: if it rains, they have water, they take some substances from the fertilizer or soil which we give them. And they are able to survive on that. Their body management is quite well thought-out, and when you observe the processes involved, it's quite relaxing. Compared to that, we don't help our own perfect machines very much. Processed foods have hundreds of ingredients, we take medicines, we load our bodies up with food supplements, and then we wonder why our bodies, these perfect organisms, are confused and have no clue what to do. In the end, we are killing ourselves by the luxury in which we live. Let's take from the plant world something of their stability and moderation. But I am afraid we're not yet mature enough to do so.

— What do you mean?

We're running out of time. In fact, we're running all the time, and have no time to just sit and look around and learn from the plants around us. We can only trust that once we do find the time, there will still be some plants left.

— Science is a very competitive field. There are teams all over the world working on similar research. Does a person from a place like Olomouc even have a chance?

We certainly do have a chance, we've been able to accomplish much already, so why not? I think that it's great that a certain problem is being researched by different international communities, because that increases the amount of information with which we can work further. In today's modern world, it is not possible to research and discover things by yourself, it's a team effort. Science knows no barriers, be they linguistic or national. It's about our common effort in getting a result, deriving information from it, and then disseminating that information within the community. We biochemists are also preparing various "tools" for basic research. One great example are isotopic or fluorescing molecules, via which we can observe metabolism in plants and people. It's fantastic when we find out that someone is using the tools we've developed. That they are practical, that it's not just structural chemistry which ends up in the desk drawer. It's not about fame, the joy comes from the discovery of something new and finding out how things work.

— Research is a long haul. Isn't it depressing when you don't get results?

It's true that if you go for a long time without success, you can get a bit depressed. When you try something for the fifteenth time and it's not working, it can be demotivating.

— So what do you do?

You go back to the lab. You have to think through everything again, look at the problem from a different perspective. Change the conditions. Over and over again. You get more depressed when, after months of work, you are able to do something in the way you initially sketched it on paper or on the computer – but it still doesn't work. You sit there and wonder what could possibly be wrong – it was so perfectly conceived and modelled!

— So don't get discouraged?

Exactly, and don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone. Because... what's written in the textbooks? That's fine, for starters. But for research, you cannot be afraid to work outside the box. Because when you succeed, that joy is boundless. And although the road to success is long, it's worth it. Trust me. Failure in chemistry does not mean a dead end.

— When are you most happy? In the lab, or in the field? Where do you find the greatest adventure as a scientist?

In my head. I love thinking about what we are going to study, how it might work, how it might be put into practice. I actually make up little stories. That's the real adrenaline for me.

— A kind of private lab in your head.

Something like that. And I've always been interested in coming up with completely new molecules.

— What are those?

You study how the elements can fit together in order to create a specific structure, you sketch it, and then you can try to create it in a flask. I love doing that.

— If you were to choose your field today, knowing how much failure is involved in the work, would you choose chemistry again?

Absolutely. It is a discipline which is exact and creative at the same time. It's a world which has set rules, where you can measure exactly what you need. But at the same time, you have room for your own creativity. It's like painting a picture. The paints on your palette are always the same. But how you mix them and what you are able to create, is completely up to you.

New CD brings together university choirs of four nations

The international project Visegrad Choral Bridges III – Folklore Inspiration, financed by the Visegrad Fund, brought together four university choirs from Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, the latter represented by the Ateneo Mixed Chamber



Choir of Palacký University Olomouc. The university choirs are to celebrate and preserve the richness of the national folk traditions of the Visegrad Group region (V4). In addition to the final concert at Olomouc's Red Church, a CD was also produced, which contains a joint recording of choral arrangements of folk songs in the original languages of all participating countries, conducted by the choir-masters of each choir. The recording can be listened to for free on the Ateneo Choir's YouTube channel. (ipu)

UP Commemorative Medal for Bernd Herzogenrath



Literary, sound, and film scholar Prof Bernd Herzogenrath was awarded the Palacký University Commemorative Medal for his long-standing professional and personal contributions to the UP Faculty of Arts and the City of Olomouc. The outstanding teacher from Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany, received the medal in the Corpus Christi Chapel from Jan Stejskal, Dean of the UP Faculty of Arts. (map)

Repeated Beginnings

For almost 80 years, the history of art, architecture, and historic preservation has been available for study in Olomouc. During the previous regime, this field had a difficult time and often had to struggle for its place at the university. Its intricate history is now revealed through the visually rich and distinctive chronicle *Opakované začátky* [Repeated Beginnings], which provides a compelling testimony of the era that goes far beyond the borders of Olomouc. The book, produced by the Department of Art History at the UP Faculty of Arts, was published by the UP Press. (tof)



New school year!

A dulcimer band, Balkan rhythms, workshops by student clubs and university departments, presentation of the Rector's awards to volunteers, and so much more – in other words, a huge programme of entertainment and information was available in the courtyard of the UP Armoury (and elsewhere). The MEET UP festival is how the university regularly commences the academic year and welcomes new students. (ipu)



UP Endowment Fund supports eleven talented students

The UP Endowment Fund is distributing more than CZK 1.1 million to this year's scholarship holders to support their scientific work. The supported students are engaged in the development of new drugs for tuberculosis, the design of ergonomic compensatory aids for musicians, the study of interreligious relations in Western society, etc. "I am so excited about the selected projects. They are ambitious and very well prepared, and I look forward to seeing their results. The activities and intentions of the scholarship holders are of great promise, not only for our university," said Rector Martin Procházka. The students supported are Nina Kadášová (FMD, FS), Aneta Ottová (FHS), Marie Pražáková (FS), Barbora Štefková (FS), Jan Chasák (FS), Jozef Kristek (FS), Markéta Fuksová (FS), Oleksandr Prystopiuk (FS), Sára Filipová (FS), Petr Mocek (CMFT, FPC), and Nika Tótová (CMFT). (vim)



Theology student's documentary about the Löw-Beer family

Part of the history of the Löw-Beer family, which significantly contributed to the development of the textile industry in Moravia, is presented in a short documentary by Martin Saifrt, a student of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology. The film, set in the former family factory in Brněnec, which is also associated with Oskar Schindler, was created to fulfil the study requirements for the Ethics and Culture in Media Communication programme. “Apart from being one of the most important tex-



tile magnates in the monarchy and then in Czechoslovakia, this family also set technological and social trends. They created new technologies and provided their employees with above-standard care within an elaborate social system, built schools for the children of their employees, and even secured retirement savings for them,” said Saifrt, who was inspired by a play about the Löw-Beers and having read Thomas Keneally's book *Schindler's List*. (vim)

Roll Up Your Sleeves

There are different areas of life in which we can compete and try to win. One of them, however, is far more beneficial than the others. It is the free donation of blood and plasma, hence the competition of UP faculties Roll Up Your Sleeves. Students and staff can do a good deed and enter the competition on behalf of their respective faculties until early December. It's another event promoting blood donation at the university, in addition to the traditional week-long Donate Blood with the Rector at the beginning of the semester. (ipu)



International Haná



Connecting cultures and learning about different customs and traditions was the focus of the International Haná Festival, which was jointly organised by the UP Welcome Office and the Archdiocesan Caritas of Olomouc. “The long-term goal of such activities is to create an open community not only at the university but in the whole of Olomouc, where different nations and ethnicities will feel welcome and at the same time become part of both the university and the local community. We are trying to involve foreigners living in Olomouc in local activities and create an environment where they can be inspired, have fun, and feel supported. At the same time, we want to show the locals that foreign cultures are not a threat but the contrary: an opportunity for knowledge and development,” said Alena Vyskočilová from UP WO. The festival presented a rich programme in the courtyard of the Armoury, which included international music performances, samples of world cuisine, interactive workshops, and a science show. (ipu)

Filmouka wins Most Beautiful Children's Book at the Havlíčkův Brod fair

Filmouka [Filmology] is not only a playful textbook about the world of cinema for school children but also won Most Beautiful Children's book of the 34th Autumn Book Fair in Havlíčkův Brod. This unique publication, published by Palacký University Press and the Czech Association for Film and Audiovisual Education, was acknowledged by the expert jury of the oldest Czech book fair in its traditional accompanying competition. Cultural and educational activities and workshops related to *Filmology* and the introduction of audiovisual education in schools continues during the autumn. A detailed and free teacher's guide is now available as well. Principals, teachers, and lecturers can find more detailed information at www.filmouka.cz. The book is available in the UP Press e-shop. (tof)



Silvie Chlumcová: I shadowed the British ambassador

“It was a giant step outside my comfort zone. I had never had an opportunity to move in such exalted circles before. I found myself in a position unknown to me. Thank you for the opportunity! I met so many wonderful people and learned so much! This tiny one-day window into the operations of diplomacy, into how difficult the ordinary day of an ambassador is, convinced me that this is truly hard but fulfilling work,” says Silvie Chlumcová, a UP Faculty of Arts Master’s student in Media Studies – Cultural Studies Specialisation.

She explains how she was able to get a glimpse into the world of diplomacy and foreign affairs. Thanks to the Ambassador for a Day project, she spent one day with

Matt Field, the British Ambassador to the Czech Republic. In addition to “shadowing” the diplomat for one whole day, she also met with Markéta Pekarová Adamová, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, and Bijan Sabet, the US Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

She also visited the non-profit Život 90’s community centre and debated with experts from NATO on transatlantic relationships. At an evening ceremony, she spoke about her experiences before the assembled guests.

Ambassador for a Day is a joint programme of the British Embassy, the US Embassy, and the Canadian Embassy in

the Czech Republic, intended for young women. It gives them first-hand experience of how diplomacy and foreign relations work in practice, and ideally should provide them with the first steps on their own professional career paths.

“I would be very happy if my experience would help other women to find the inspiration to make their dreams come true, regardless of their age. First, I had to fill out a questionnaire and write an essay on NATO. I hoped that the embassy would appreciate my opinions, and they did,” says Chlumcová, adding that during that one day, she found that diplomacy is extremely exhausting but also extremely rewarding.



text: Eva Hrudníková
photos: Jakub Čermák

experience



Michael Mitraš: A real-life model for making one's dreams come true

When they were passing out ambition and perseverance, Michael Mitraš must have been in first in line. He got an armful of both. What is more, they mixed him up a double cocktail of courage dashed with humility. How else to explain that for nearly twenty years, he has tirelessly chased his life's dream. And on that road, no obstacle proved too large. He's almost there, at his dream of becoming a lawyer. Michael Mitraš is in his last year of the Master's programme Law and Legal Science.

“The desire to be a lawyer some day is probably something I've had before even starting school. We used to talk a lot about life at home. I realised that law relates to almost everything in our lives, and makes things clear. I never even thought about doing anything else,” says the twenty-four-year-old law student. And that desire has only strengthened over time. “I've stumbled a few times in my life. I don't want anyone to ever make a fool out of me again. I know that with a legal education, life will be a lot easier.” →



Michael Mitraš (b. 1999)

A native of Hranice. He graduated from the Jakub Škoda Gymnasium in Přerov. As a secondary school student, he won a scholarship at the prestigious Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute in the USA. He has held the post of Governor of the Olomouc Region Youth Assembly. He is in his final year of the UP Faculty of Law Master's programme in Law and Legal Science and is a member of the UP Faculty of Law Academic Senate.

Once he fulfils all his study requirements, that won't make him the first in his family with a university degree. Michael's grandfather taught math and physics. His uncle Robert Sutorý – a social worker, thanks to whom dozens of Roma children have been able to finish secondary school – has two university degrees. “Many people have inspired me. In addition to my grandfather and uncle, there are of course my parents and grandmother. Wonderful people, who have always done their utmost for me and my brother,” he explains, immediately adding: “I hope that once I finish my studies, I'll be able to pay my family back for all they've invested in me.”

Already during his secondary school studies in Přerov, Mitraš surpassed his fellow students. For example, he won an American government contest to attend the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute. As the only Czech there, he completed a month-long study stay at a North Carolina university. “That was an invaluable experience. Every European country sent one representative – thanks to that, I have friends all over Europe,” he says with a smile. While still

a secondary school student, he also found work as a facilitator at Microsoft and was the Governor of the Olomouc Region Youth Assembly.

He has kept active, even during his law studies. He completed an 18-month study internship at a public defender's office, an internship at the Olomouc Regional Office, he works in a law firm, and he's a regular presence at the Faculty of Law. As a member of the Faculty of Law Academic Senate, he approves important by-laws, amendments, and helps resolve student problems. When he speaks about his faculty, he uses the words “demanding” and “practical” several times. “The level of teaching at our faculty is high. The courses are demanding but worthwhile,” he adds. In order to study at the university, he has had several part-time jobs. He refuses to be a financial burden on his family. So in addition to seeing him at UP, you might encounter Michael behind a shop counter.

He's been trying to pass on the knowledge and experience he's gained to students at primary and secondary schools. He travels to give lectures on history, life, Roma culture, and to advise kids on how to make their

dreams come true. “I work with groups of minority students. It doesn't matter to me whether someone wants to be a plumber, a computer gamer, or a doctor. I try to show them ways how to get there. And assuage their fears and debunk the reasons why they think they can't,” he explains.

Once he has his university degree, he wants to get into advocacy. And eventually, perhaps become a judge. “It's kind of an extension on my dream to become a lawyer. We'll see where the following years will take me,” he contemplates, and is looking forward to spending the first money he makes as a trainee lawyer on a hand-tailored suit.

He gets away from his demanding studies, work, and all his other activities by escaping into nature. He admits that he still needs to learn how to relax. “I love going camping. That's where I can clear my head,” says the coffee lover and aficionado of Czech cuisine.

On the question as to whether he is proud of what he has accomplished, Michael Mitraš give a quick and simple answer. “I am a proud person. And I'm happy to be Romany.”

text: David Kresta
photos: Jakub Čermák

alumna

**Aneta Fricová,
pet physiotherapist**





Aneta Fricová and her border collie Dreamy

Aneta Fricová (b. 2001)

She was born and lives in Šumperk. After graduating from secondary school, she applied to the Bachelor's Physiotherapy programme at the UP Faculty of Health Sciences. During her studies, she attended Kateřina Plačková's school of animal physiotherapy, passing her exams and receiving professional qualifications as a Certified Small Animal Rehabilitation Therapist. She then joined the Fyziotlapka animal physiotherapy centre. At present, she is studying in the Applied Physiotherapy Master's programme at the Masaryk University Faculty of Medicine in Brno. She also works part-time at the Šumperk Hospital.

Physiotherapy is certainly one of the most popular healthcare fields. This is borne out by the enormous number of applicants to the UP Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Clinical Rehabilitation. Did you know that comprehensive musculoskeletal care can also be given to man's best friend? Aneta Fricová, an alumna of UP FHS, has been working in animal physiotherapy for several years now, and since last year has become a real asset at the Olomouc animal physiotherapy centre Fyziotlapka (PhysiotheraPaw).

The Šumperk native got her first dog when she was ten years-old and a year later she began doing sport agility training with it, which is akin to horse show jumping. She was able to get into championships at home and abroad, but more pertinently, she learned how to communicate with dogs, which she capitalised on several years later in her job as an animal physiotherapist. "I always wanted to be a veterinarian, I never even considered anything else. But then I injured my knee and during physio I got interested in physiotherapy. It immediately fascinated me. I began to get interested in animal physiotherapy, which at that time was not so developed in this country. I figured I could concentrate more and even get a job in the field," Fricová remembers.

After completing a weekend course in massage and the Dorn Method for Dogs

(the latter a type of physiotherapy of gently and slowly returning joints and vertebrae into their proper positions), Aneta wondered where she would apply to university. "I decided I wanted to study Physiotherapy at the Faculty of Health Sciences and then devote myself to animal physiotherapy. I could thus combine knowledge and techniques from both fields. During my studies I finished a course on holistic animal physiotherapy with Kateřina Plačková and then later joined Fyziotlapka," explains the young woman, who successfully completed her Bachelor's degree at UP FHS last summer and entered the Masaryk University Applied Physiotherapy Master's programme in Brno in the autumn.

As a physiotherapist oscillating between the worlds of people and animals, she has been able to determine their main differences and similarities. "Many physiological processes and tissue healing are similar in animals and humans. Communication is the key. I have been fortunate in that I have worked with dogs for a long time; I can 'read' them and know what to expect. Sport dogs come to us who have been trained to listen for commands and have no problem with socialising. Then there are pet dogs, which is sometimes more complicated, because they are not familiar with our centre's environment.

For example, we have a hydrotherapy bath here that makes a lot of noise which pet dogs are not familiar with, and it scares them. But it's just a question of two or three sessions, and then they get used to it," Fricová explains.

Fyziotlapka does not only work with dogs – they treat cats, coatis, pigs, and even pet hedgehogs. "We have three groups of clients. There are those to whom a veterinarian recommended animal physiotherapy. Then there are those who found out about it on the internet or social media. The third group are those involved in dog sports, who come to us for preventative treatment or for physio after an injury," she elaborates, and also lists the common problems which plague her clients. "We most often get herniated discs, especially in smaller dogs. Larger dogs suffer from hip dysplasia, torn ligaments, fractured limbs, sometimes even neurological problems such as peripheral polyneuropathy." The animal owners are always present during the therapy, receiving advice and tips on exercises to carry out at home.

This year she worked with human as well as animal patients. "I worked as a temp in a ward at the Šumperk Hospital, as well as with clients at Fyziotlapka. I would be so happy if in the future I could keep doing both!"

UP wins Olomouc Region Award for its contributions to the environment

Responsible waste management and long-term effort to avoid its creation brought Palacký University and the student organization Sustainable Palacký the Olomouc Region Award for contributions to the environment, specifically in the category Significant Achievement in Waste Separation and Recycling.

The Olomouc Region singled out the university's approach to food waste, which makes up a significant portion of mixed waste. However, with proper separation and management, food scraps do not have to end up in waste heaps, but can be of further use. This is why in August 2023 UP joined the tridimgastro.cz project, which is aimed at

separation, pick-up, and energetic processing of kitchen waste. UP became the first Czech university whose food waste goes to the biogas generator of the Energy Financial Group (EFG) Rapotín, where it is ecologically processed to produce low-emission heat, electricity, and biomethane.

“They say that the best waste is that which is never created. This is why a long-term campaign against food waste has been taking place at UP dining halls, a cooperative effort by UP's Sustainable University and the Sustainable Palacký student group. Posters with UP's namesake František Palacký urge students and employees to adopt a responsible approach to food – not only in the dining

halls, but also in their own fridges and larders,” says Zuzana Huňková, UP Sustainable Development Coordinator.

Since 2016, Sustainable Palacký has been running the Freeshop, where UP students and employees can bring things which are still in good shape, but no longer wanted by them, for others to take and use. The group has also founded the popular Facebook group Free Food UPOL, whose 3,500 members' unwanted food can find a place on someone's plate. Its members also care for the Václavka community garden at the student dormitories, and regularly take part in the annual World Clean Up Day Czech Republic.





Jiaoli Li and Jian Du

Students from Kunming, People's Republic of China. They graduated in Applied Psychology from Yunnan Normal University in Kunming; currently they are in the UP Faculty of Education Special Education doctoral programme in English and are also working at the faculty's Center of Evidence-Based Education & Arts Therapies (EduArt).

我们在2018年第一次来到帕拉茨基大学教育学院参加创造性艺术疗法的夏校课程。那次短短一个月的生活给我们留下了深刻的印象，古雅的环境和闲适的气氛吸引我们在2021年又回到了这里攻读博士项目。

我们在这里读博的这几年，导师Jiri Kantor给予了我们最大程度的信任和支持，让我们得以在学术领域不断地精进。我们不仅根植于奥洛穆茨进行学习，也受益于学校的交流项目让我们有机会到世界各地进行交流。学校提供给我们的这些丰富资源使我们在学术的各方面都得到了很好的发展。

在日常生活中，学校的很多老师和同学不遗余力地帮助我们解决生活中的困难，让我们基本没有遇到任何语言和文化冲突带来的障碍。另外，这里的课外活动也十分精彩，在一年四季不同的时期有不同的项目能够带我们领略摩拉维亚的自然和人文风情。这种多元化的体验让我们更好地融入了本地的生活。

我们非常高兴选择到帕拉茨基大学教育学院学习，希望这所450年历史悠久的学府能够历久弥新，再创辉煌。

We first came to the Faculty of Education at Palacký University in 2018 to participate in a summer school programme on Creative Arts Therapy. That short month left a lasting impression on us, and the charming environment and relaxed atmosphere brought us back in 2021 to pursue our doctoral studies here.

Throughout our years in the doctoral programme, our supervisor, Jiří Kantor, has provided us with immense trust and support, entitling us to continuously improve our academic skills. We were not only rooted in our studies in Olomouc but also, through the university's exchange programmes, engaged in academic exchanges around the world. These abundant resources provided by the university helped us develop in all aspects of our academic journey.

In our daily lives, many teachers and fellow students have helped us to overcome challenges, ensuring us to navigate any potential language and cultural barriers with ease. Additionally, the extracurricular activities here are truly stimulating, with different programmes in each season that allow us to experience the natural beauty and cultural richness of Moravia. This diverse range of experiences has helped us better integrate into the local community.

We are truly delighted with our choice to study at the Palacký University Faculty of Education. We hope that this prestigious institution, with its 450-year history, will continue to flourish and achieve new heights in the future.

Bedel Josef Horák: When I hear those fanfares, I get chills up and down my spine

You can't miss him. Even at the most important ceremonies at Palacký University – for he's the one leading the procession. Wearing the distinctive gown of the bedel, mace in hand. He is a living symbol, representing the university, unmistakable. Josef Horák. And of course, he is just as charming when not wearing his ceremonial robes.

Multiple generations of students have met the silver-haired man with the imposing moustache. And many have him in their graduation photographs in their family albums. "Weren't you the gentleman carrying the mace upon which I pledged my graduation promises?" This is exactly how, sometimes with great timidity, they often approach Josef Horák.

He has spent a good deal of his life at Olomouc's university. He has been accompanying its rectors in the role of the bedel

since the post-Velvet Revolution events of 1989. His striking facial features have been written indelibly into the memories of the many personalities who have visited the university.

"I remember well, for example, the late Count Karel Schwarzenberg. Another interesting encounter was with the famous musician and later minister Michael Kocáb. When the university celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, Kocáb was among those who received special awards of merit from UP. I looked down and noticed his shoelaces had come untied and told him to take care of that, as we didn't want him tripping over his shoelaces on the way to accept his medal. He was surprised, thanked me, and then said, 'Friends,'" Horák remembers.

He has many such stories, but don't wait for him to spill them. As a proper bedel, he

not only represents the university, but he also honours it. His lips are sealed.

"You know, I love my job. I've always been lucky with people. I don't need the spotlight. I take life as it comes. I never plan anything," says the charismatic gentleman with the soothing voice, whom Palacký University recently honoured with a special commemorative beer, "Pedel" ("Bedel" in Czech). Pedel is brewed from premium new strains of barley and Czech hops, making it just as original as its archetype.

Every university has its bedel, a ceremonial personage. But Josef Horák considers this duty his mission. "Every graduation, even at the Children's University or the University of the Third Age, is unique. I love the ceremonial atmosphere. When I hear those fanfares, I still get chills up and down my spine. As much today as ever."

Josef Horák, UP Bedel, currently also the UP Rector's Office chauffeur.

You can read more about the history and importance of the university bedel on the following page in an article by Prof Jiří Fiala.



The “Bedel”

The “Bedel” – the aide carrying the rector’s or dean’s mace (from Latin, “pedellus” – one who summons) – can be seen on web pages dedicated to Palacký University Faculty of Arts graduation ceremonies. The etymology of the noun is however slightly more complicated. In Czech, the word is “pedel”, which Jiří Rejzek in the *Etymologický slovník jazyka českého* (Czech Etymological Dictionary, 2009) defines as “pedel: university employee who accompanies the university rector by carrying the university insignia during ceremonial occasions. From Middle Latin *pedellus*, *bedellus*, ‘university beadle’, Germanic, from Old High German *bitil*, Old English *bydel*, he who summons, requests, ‘spokesman’, from the verb found today in German *biten*, ‘to ask’”. Today however there is nothing to prevent this academic office being assumed in the spirit of gender equality by a female aide of a rector or dean, albeit a muscular one – the weight of the UP Rector’s mace is 4.054 kg, and faculty maces are slightly heavier.

Jesuit bedels

The Society of Jesus – Jesuit – Lycée was founded in Olomouc in 1566; on 23 December 1573 it was elevated to an academy with two faculties, the free arts (philosophical) and theological faculties. Its small number of Jesuit professors does not allow us to presume that in that year they established a separate office of academic bedel. The function was likely assumed by the teaching order, similarly as at the start of the Prague Jesuit Academy, founded at the

Church of St Clement in 1566. It is necessary to remember that the members of the Society of Jesus were divided into four categories. These were the *professi* of the Four Vows, i.e. the foremost Jesuits, of which there were few; the *coadjutores spirituales* – clergy and aides in sacral administration and in universities (professors); then scholastics, i.e. teachers (masters) of lower schools and Jesuit students; and hierarchically the lowest were the *tyrones* (novices) and *coadjutores temporales* – craftsmen and various servants, from whom the bedel was also recruited.

The duties of a bedel at Jesuit schools are laid out in the *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Jesu* (Method and System of Studies at the Society of Jesus), first published in Naples in 1588, with many subsequent editions. Zikmund Winter, in his monograph *Life at Prague Universities; A Cultural Picture of the 15th and 16th Centuries* (1899), summarises them as follows: “Of the lower officials, the *Bidellus* is soon encountered, a sort of living symbol of the Rector’s jurisdiction. Otherwise, bedels – also known by the title *adjutores magistrorum*, [i.e. Magisters’ aides] – had the responsibility of enforcing tidiness in schools, unlocking and locking the main doors, announcing school hours, ensuring that members of the Jesuit Order sat separately at school from the novices and the novices separately from the lay students; the *Bidellus* or *Bedellus* posts and distributes announcements, decorates the auditorium for events, shows guests to their places, carries the mace before the Rector, and runs the *Carcer*, i.e. dormitory detention centre. The *Bedellus* pledges obedience to the Rector; but before the pledge, he must declare his Catholic faith to take precedence.”

Since academic institutions dispensed their own justice, the bedel was the warder in the detention centre, which the students called the *ornithoboscum*, or “chicken coop” (likely because they were just as filthy). The Olomouc academic bedel was mentioned specifically in the privilege granted by Holy Roman Emperor Matthias on 14 October 1617 (preserved only in copies), in which the emperor ordained that the mayor is not allowed to lock students up in the town gaol, but must detain them in suitable living quarters and then transport them to the Jesuit College, and not in

handcuffs, unless they be “rebelles”. The Rector of the Jesuit College and Academy then would summons the accuser and the accused student to him via the bedel (“*per bidellum*”), the Rector to judge the case, and if he finds the accusation well-founded, impose the academic carcer as punishment upon the student, or as a last resort, strike him from the university album (i.e. the academy register).

Bedel Jan Mrkvička

During the existence of the State University in Brno (1778–1782), due to a dispute, the number of bedels who had the right to supervise students’ morals (and according to this task perform inspections of pubs, coffeehouses, and other public spaces) was reduced from three to one. The decree of 15 March 1783 by Emperor Joseph II abolished academic jurisdiction; academic citizens afterwards were to be subject to city courts, and the carcer of the Imperial-Royal Lyceum in Olomouc was shut down.

Since the Olomouc Imperial-Royal Lyceum, and at the start even its Imperial-Royal Francis University, lacked lower officials, Bedel Jan Mrkvička (then written “Johann Marquiczka”) from when he started in 1776 as *cancellarius* served especially to organise graduation ceremonies and prepare official diplomas, for which he collected not inconsequential fees. When Mrkvička died in 1831 after having served for 55 years, the new bedel and building manager, or “house father” (Universitäts-Pedell und Hausverwalter) Johann Klem had heated discussions with the university *actuarium* Johann Grabner about these fees.

Bedel Josef Drápela

In closing, of all the bedels who served Olomouc higher education after its re-establishment in 1946 as Palacký University Olomouc, we would like to remember Josef Drápela, the long-time beadle of the Faculty of Arts, who was very popular among students in the 1960s and 70s due to his original opinions and approach to life. In a way, he almost never left the faculty, since he occupied servants’ quarters with a separate entrance on the ground floor of the left wing of the faculty building – these premises completely lost their form and function after the extensive renovations to the building in the years 2014–2018.



Responsibilities of the Bedel of the schools of the Society of Jesus as set forth in the *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Jesu*, Rome, 1606.



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