

Andrej Sýkora - Academic Senate candidate statement

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It was around 1AM and we have decided to jump into the swimming pool during our 1st year introductory course in Poněšice. With my hair still wet, I was standing in a group immersed in a debate when came what I was most afraid of - the David Lynch topic. I've never seen any Lynch movie. I was thinking what would I say when a classmate has saved me by declaring that narrative cinematography bores her. Someone asked her what department was she from. She answered. We all started laughing. If we were in a movie, someone would throw someone else into the water, but we weren't and we went to sleep.

This image, written into my memory, often comes to my mind when thinking about our school. It represents FAMU as a community that is not afraid of its own contradictions. I think that is a great feature. Fear of contradictions leads to dogmatism, to suppressing diversity. Concepts that I do not associate with art. I myself am full of contradictions. A few years ago, I was critical of David Kořínek during the CAS department head presentations. Today, I would choose him to be the head of the department in the latest selection procedure. And it's fine that way.

Solving tensions that arise from these contradictions is a natural part of functional, healthy academic self-governance. However, my goal as a potential senator is not pretending that a life without contradictions would be the most beautiful one. As I outline above, it would not. Contradiction is an opportunity to constructively enhance our thinking about the school, about the diverse individualities that inhabit it. Contradiction is the beginning of a consensus.

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The Academic Senate is first and foremost an institution that oversees. However, overseeing does not mean only reading and interpreting rules, decrees and regulations, but also imprinting our own values into the decision making. That's why I dedicate the following paragraphs mostly to values that I deem important in the context of FAMU and education in general.

I believe that the school should be caring, nurturing and attentive. That we should perpetually strive to create and sustain a safe space, where we can work regardless of personal sympathies and aversions, where we can work without fears of our mental and physical health, where we can work freely and sincerely. Academic Senate should be open to inquiries and thinking about how the study workload and harmonogram influences the quality of life of its students, what changes can help to improve it, how to reflect upon worsening financial conditions of living in Prague and many other areas connected with these topics.

I believe that the school should examine and break hierarchies of power, which are an important part of the contemporary debate about the art school system in general. I'm a proponent of limiting office terms of department chairs to 8 - 12 years. Academic Senate should start an intensive discussion of this change and propose a change to FAMU regulations.

I believe that the school should closely listen to voices of its students when it comes to discrimination and abuse. Student initiative "NE!MUSÍŠ TO VYDRŽET", started at DAMU and continued at FAMU highlights questions and problems that are very complex, but necessary to solve. Academic Senate has already elected the first FAMU ombudsman at its last meeting and should continue with supporting the students and faculty when it comes to fighting unfair treatment of students.

I believe that the school should provide a dignified working and financial environment for its teachers. Academic Senate of course cannot influence governmental budgeting policies, but it can watch the situation and reflect on the catastrophic state of public art school teacher's compensations.

Last but not least, I believe that the school should constantly evolve, be open to ideas, be self-reflective. Academic Senate should also follow this path.

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I should also add something about myself. My name is Andrej, I was born in Žilina, Slovakia, but I've spent the last 10 years in a green apartment building with a tower in lower Žižkov.

I'm accompanied by my girlfriend and approximately 12 plants. One of the plants was unfortunately attacked by our Roomba a few days ago and we are now hoping it recovers.

During the 10 years I've spent in Prague I've managed to unsuccessfully study two universities, successfully study CAS at FAMU, start two companies that went bankrupt, start two companies that did not go bankrupt, cofound the Game Design department and become its first chair. Currently I'm dedicating my time to working at the department, working at one of my companies and working as a narrative designer on the first videogame of Propulsive Games, a Slovak game development studio.

Finally, I'd like to thank Jan Bernard, Terézia Halamová, Lukáš Janičík, Marie-Magdalena Kochová, Tomáš Oramus and Alice Růžičková for their will and confidence to nominate me into the senate. Thank you all.

And thanks to you, the reader, for the time you've spent reading this text. I'll be looking forward to the discussion at the meeting of academic community.

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