

THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED

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The coat of arms of the University of Szeged was designed when the institutions of higher learning of Szeged were integrated. One of the most important requirements in designing this new emblem was that it reveal the institutions' characteristics, recalling its history and traditions as well as its location in Szeged, while also recognizing that the University of Szeged is the legal successor of the former Hungarian University of Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania).


The coat of arms of the University of Szeged is a triangular shield erect, party per fess gules and azure, its upper edge concavo-concave. In field gules an armed griffin or, turning toward the dexter, its wings abaisé and it is carrying a flaming torch or in its outstretched front claws. In base azure two bendlets argent separate the red field (gules) from the blue one (azure), in which a castle argent

with three crenelated towers and an open arched gate are borne. The tallest, central tower has four loop-holes, the lower flanking towers each have two.

The shield is enwreathed with two olive branches, both vert and tied with a swallow-tailed ribbon gules. This folded ribbon bears the University's motto „VERITAS, VIRTUS, LIBERTAS” – Truth, Virtue, Freedom. The legend surrounding the coat of arms is „Universitas Scientiarum Szegediensis” on the upper half and „Szegedi Tudományegyetem” below.

The coat of arms of the University of Szeged is one of the so-called canting arms (tesserae loquentes). Since the upper edge of the shield recalls the contour of an open book, the overall shape of the coat of arms of the University of Szeged is a reference to the bibliophile nature of the institution and it also reveals its insistence on and need for all





forms of information both in academic research and in education.

The tincture gules symbolizes the university's positive outlook on life and pursuit of knowledge, features also characterizing the town of Szeged, which welcomed the university when it had to abandon its original location in Kolozsvár. The charge of the griffin, which is common to the coats of arms of several Hungarian nobiliary families, recognizes Count Kuno Klegelsberg, who played a major role in transferring the university to Szeged and oversaw its design and construction. The mythic griffin, half eagle and half lion, symbolizes dominance over both earth and sky. It also refers to humanity's endeavour to understand the cosmos. In addition, the griffin embodies strength, perseverance and wisdom - indispensable for academic research and the acquisition of knowledge. In various myths the griffin is the agent of communication between this and the other world, and thus it also symbolizes medicine and theology. In the Middle Ages this fabulous creature was considered the visual representative of both human and divine characteristics. The griffin is a motif of high significance in the mythology of the Onogur people,

who arrived and settled down in the Carpathian Basin around 670 AD and from whom the internationally known words denoting the country, Hungária, Hungary are derived. The bird is also to symbolize the Sun and thus it is also the emblem of Szeged, the 'sunshine city'.

The torch is to give light in darkness and it is to symbolize the various fields of science, which have always played a progressive role in the history of mankind. According to the most traditional interpretation of the symbol, the raised torch means Life, while one turned upside down refers to Death. The raised torch in the coat of arms of the University of Szeged can be interpreted as the symbol of saying 'yes' to Life and acting in the name of Life. The torch is the allegory of peace and freedom and at the same time it is also a device, with the help of which the hydra of human misery can be defeated. The torch is to symbolize the Moon whereas the flaming torch is perceived as the combined emblem of the Sun and the Moon, both of which appear as common motives in ancient Hungarian mythology: they are usually represented on the two sides of the Tree of Life, as exemplified by the motif on the cover plate of the

Hungarian Holy Crown or in the coat of arms of Transylvania. (This latter example might be a reference to the city of Kolozsvár, the original location of the university).

The silver bendlets in the university's coat-of-arms refer to Szeged's two rivers, the Tisza and the Maros and since they are borne horizontally the bendlets also symbolize the impartiality of academia.

The motif of the triple-towered gate was taken from the coat of arms of the town of Kolozsvár and in this context the emblem is to signify that the University of Szeged is the legal successor of the University of Kolozsvár, originally founded in 1581 by King of Poland and Prince of Transylvania, István Báthory. Owing to the country's stormy history the operation of the university was interrupted on several occasions until in 1872 Emperor Francis Joseph I reorganized it. After the tragic Treaty of Trianon the University of Kolozsvár was transferred to Szeged; consequently, the present-day University of Szeged is the legal successor and the academic inheritor of the one-time University of Kolozsvár.

The olive branches below the shield refer to the scientific and academic achievements of the university as well as to the high standard of its research and training programmes, and, at the same time, these branches are also to commemorate those heroes and victims who were affiliated with the university.

The motto (devise) can be interpreted as follows: Veritas means the necessity for learning and publishing academic truths; Virtus is the requirement for the quest for truth; while Libertas underlines the necessity of realizing the previous two principles and also refers to University autonomy.

The legend surrounding the shield symbolizes the academic community of university professors and students, who in addition to being representatives of the specific Hungarian culture also aim at becoming an integral part of world civilization.