



The Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth
is pleased to award the 2024 Distinguished Achievement Medal to

Zdeněk Bakala

After leaving his native Czechoslovakia at age 19, Zdeněk Bakala T'89 arrived in the United States with little more than a \$50 bill in his pocket. A credit to his remarkable determination, creativity, and resolve, within a decade he learned to speak English, earned his Tuck MBA, and built a successful investment banking career in New York and London.

In 1991, less than two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he returned to Prague.

As Zdeněk would later say during his speech at the 2013 Tuck Investiture ceremony, it was an opportune time for entrepreneurial bankers, lawyers, and consultants to help shape policies and create the conditions for a thriving market-driven economy. He was tapped by Credit Suisse First Boston to establish its operations in the new Czech Republic. From there, Zdeněk went on to create, and later sell, Patria Finance, the country's first private investment banking group.

He cofounded BXR, a diversified investment group with a global portfolio of assets in 2004. That same year, BXR acquired OKD, a major Czech mining company that later became part of New World Resources. In 2008, after operations were streamlined and consolidated, the \$2.1 billion IPO set records on the Prague and London stock exchanges. In recent years, Zdeněk has continued to invest across a range of sectors, including natural resources, media, real estate, transportation, gaming, and sports.

An avid cyclist, he is the majority shareholder of Soudal Quick-Step, a Belgian World Tour cycling team, and also owns Economia, a Prague-based media house that publishes several award-winning independent newspapers and magazines.

Alongside his success as a global business leader, Zdeněk is a committed philanthropist focused on promoting economic opportunity, free speech protection, and democracy throughout the world. In 2007, he and his wife Michaela established the Bakala Foundation, which provides educational training and awards scholarships for talented Czech students to study abroad at leading institutions. The foundation also supports several programs offering skills training and mentorship for aspiring journalists.

In 2009, the couple endowed the Bakala Professorship at Tuck, currently held by Senior Associate Dean for Innovation and Growth Joseph J. Gerakos D'90. During the recent Tuck Difference campaign, the Bakalas made a transformative \$25 million gift to endow the Bakala TuckGO Program, the portfolio of for-credit, immersive educational experiences that comprise our global learning requirement. Zdeněk is also a proud member of Tuck's board of advisors.

Among other organizations and causes the Bakalas support are the Václav Havel Library, which serves as a center for the documentation and research of modern Czech history, the Aspen Institute Central Europe, the FW de Klerk Foundation, and the Design Museum of London.

Zdeněk's life and career journey is a powerful demonstration of our school's mission to develop wise, decisive leaders who better the world through business. In recognition of his accomplishments as an entrepreneurial business leader, his dedication to education and democracy in his homeland and abroad, and his generous service and support for the global Tuck community, the Tuck School of Business is honored to present Zdeněk Bakala with the 2024 Distinguished Achievement Medal.

Matthew J. Slaughter

Dean

Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth

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