Cover letter – András Derényi

15 July 2026

I have a multifaceted motivation for applying for membership of the Board of Trustees. For several decades, I have been engaged in the development and study of higher education in a variety of roles. My work has focused primarily on modernizing teaching and learning, quality enhancement, internationalization, and strategic planning and implementation. In these areas, I have worked as a lecturer, researcher,[1] analyst, consultant, professional lead of major projects, and member of Hungarian and international higher education organizations, governing bodies, and working groups. These areas are closely connected to questions of institutional organization and governance, and I have therefore inevitably engaged with these issues as well. Five years ago, I initiated a research project funded by OTKA (Hungarian Scientific Research Fund), and as a member of the research team, I have since been studying and analyzing the history, characteristics, and consequences of the Hungarian university model transformation. The research has resulted in several publications, both in Hungary and in international academic journals.[2] Based on this work, I have developed a deep and detailed understanding of the operation of the public-interest trust foundations (KEKVA) maintaining Hungarian universities, including effective and problematic governance practices and the key challenges they face. These considerations motivate me to gain a first-hand, practical understanding of the role and functioning of a university maintainer from within the system.

For more than 20 years, through my consulting firm, I provided advisory services to successive rectors of the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME), primarily in the areas of strategy, educational development, and quality enhamcement. My relationship with the institution was close; many members of the MOME community regarded me as an "insider" colleague, and likewise, I became deeply committed to MOME, identifying with its challenges as well as its successes. I had the opportunity to contribute to the redesign of the MOME campus as a member of the MOME Laboratory,[3] and co-authored the long-term professional vision[4] developed as part of the process. I also played a role in preparing MOME for its transition to the new university governance model during the pilot phase. My relationship with MOME began to loosen following the change in its maintaining structure, and came to an end two years ago, following the appointment of the current rector. Yet, my interest in and commitment to MOME's future have never waned. I believe that serving on the new Board of Trustees would allow me to contribute meaningfully to the success of the next transition.

The functioning of MOME's previous Board of Trustees has been subject to considerable criticism, and in recent years—particularly over the past two years—the university has found itself in situations that have been deeply distressing and, in many respects, unworthy of the institution. These events have shaken the university community, created numerous points of division, and left many with a profound sense of loss and humiliation. The new Board of Trustees should help the university community heal and ensure an environment in which academic and professional work can be carried out calmly and without undue disruption. Beyond this, however, a new approach to the role of the maintainer must be established. While taking into account the amended statutory requirements, this approach should go beyond their minimum provisions: it should respect institutional autonomy, clearly define and adhere to the boundaries between the maintainer and the university, and allow for the broadest possible scope of decision-making within the university's own authority. It should also seek and consider the views of the university community, even in matters formally falling within the Board's remit. The Board should also make its own operation transparent to the university, so that decision-making processes and the rationale behind them can be understood and traced. These are essential steps toward restoring and strengthening a relationship of trust between the maintainer and the institution.

An important task during the academic year will be the renewal of the university's expiring public-service funding agreement, either for the long term or—depending on the government's decision—for an interim period. In this process, it will be important not only to safeguard the level of state funding, but also to ensure, from the outset, that the funding indicators more effectively support MOME's strategic objectives than they have in the past. The existing indicators have been less well suited to this purpose. Yet, given their significance, these issues have diverted the attention of both the Board of Trustees and the university from pursuing substantive academic and institutional goals, as has happened at many universities in recent years. In my view,

well-designed funding indicators should not only advance the state's higher education policy objectives but also reinforce the university's own strategic priorities. This is a realistic goal; there are good international examples to draw on. As a member of the Board of Trustees, I would therefore seek to ensure that the Board and the university jointly review MOME's renewed strategy and work together to develop appropriate indicators and targets, and to prepare effectively for the negotiation and conclusion of the funding agreement.

In addition to its regular responsibilities as the university's maintainer, the newly established Board will, according to the call for applications, play an important role in reconsidering and restructuring the current governance and funding framework and in ensuring a smooth transition. This will require close cooperation not only with the government but also with the university itself. The coming academic year will therefore, in many respects, once again be a transitional period for MOME. While the current acting rector will now lead the institution as its duly elected rector, the Senate will be reconstituted to comply with statutory requirements, and the organizational changes introduced previously will have only a brief period of stability before another transition takes place a year from now. Whatever solution ultimately emerges, I believe that in these circumstances the Board can best support the MOME community and the continuity of university life by refraining from major structural changes or reforms during this one-year period. Instead, it should focus on drawing lessons from the experience of the past, so that these lessons can inform the next transition, help create better conditions for MOME, and lay foundations for long-term, professional development.

I would like to contribute personally to the Board's responsibilities outlined above, drawing on my considerable experience in higher education as well as my specific knowledge of MOME. I hope to help the university once again reach a position that reflects and befits the high professional standards and values it represents.

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[1] See, Derényi, 2018; Derényi, 2024; Lannert – Derényi, 2020.

[2] See, Mérlegen a modellváltás. *Educatio 2026, 35*(1), 82-99, The role of boards in Hungarian public interest foundation universities. *Studies in Higher Education 2023, 49*(2), 368-381, Az intézményi működési keretek átalakítási kísérletei a magyar felsőoktatásban. *Educatio 2020, 29*(1), 64-77.

[3] MOME Laboratory

[4] MOME Laboratory – Kreatív innovációs tudáspark

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