

Address by Professor Way KUO, President

Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Chairman and Members of the Council, Honorary Graduates, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with a combination of pride and humility that I address you today. I am proud to be installed as the President of City University of Hong Kong (CityU) which is already firmly established as a leading university with an international reputation. I also have a feeling of humility in facing the many challenges which lie ahead. Over the past six months since I took up my appointment, I have been truly impressed by the quality of our faculty and staff and the support they have given me. With their continued support, I have no doubt that together we can face any challenges and raise the University's reputation to new heights.

I also wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement provided by the past and present Council Members and Chairmen. Our new Council Chairman, the Hon C Y Leung, took up his appointment only three weeks ago and I would like to take this opportunity to once again warmly welcome him to CityU. I look forward to working with him on the future development of the University.

Some 60 years ago, a well-known American educator, Robert Maynard Hutchins, said:

“Freedom of inquiry, freedom of discussion, and freedom of teaching — without these a university cannot exist”.

I believe that most university academics would agree with this statement. However, the world has moved on in the past 60 years and university education has expanded dramatically providing opportunities for many more young people to benefit from study at this level.

As a consequence, more and more public funding is provided to universities and the extent of the freedoms in Hutchins statement are often questioned by those providing the funding. It is no longer feasible for universities to live in ivory towers and to teach and pursue research in any areas of their choice. Universities are expected to educate our young people in disciplines and skills which can benefit society and to conduct research which has relevance to societal needs.

Nonetheless it is essential that within the bounds set by our funding bodies, faculty have the greatest freedom in their pursuit of inquiry, discussion and teaching. CityU has a mission to respond to the needs of society through the provision of professional education and research.

Personally, I find the term “applied research” difficult to define particularly when what is called “pure research” often needs to generate a wealth of applications. I prefer the term “problems-driven research” which I believe conveys the same spirit implied in applied research but is more specific and timely. Today I want to assert that CityU is dedicated to meeting the needs of Hong Kong and the community through its emphasis on professional education and research driven by problems which need solutions that will bring benefits to society.

My immediate task is to oversee the preparation of a new strategic plan which will cover the period from 2009 to 2014. During this period, we will see CityU move from the three-year to four-year undergraduate curriculum. This is a major challenge for all our universities in Hong Kong and it is essential that our plans ensure a successful transition. The strategic plan will address this issue and include concrete proposals for developments in new discipline areas, such as energy studies. These fields are presenting major opportunities which can make significant contributions to our society. Needless to say, CityU will become more academic and faculty driven.

As I have already said, CityU is already recognised internationally as a leading University and is currently ranked 147th in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* list of the top 200 universities worldwide. When compared to other jurisdictions, it is remarkable that four of the Hong Kong universities are included in the top 200 list. France, with a population ten times that of Hong Kong, has four universities listed, and the whole of mainland China has six. There is no doubt that the effect of being listed in the world rankings is a major factor in recruiting the best qualified academic faculty to help educate our young people and to strengthen our research work. All the universities in Hong Kong, including CityU, contribute to the prosperities and modernisation of Hong Kong.

Chancellor, we owe you, as Chief Executive of Hong Kong, a great debt for the support that government provides to our universities through the University Grants Committee. Our rankings on the world scene are testament to the government’s vision for the development of our higher education system. CityU is now entering adulthood, matured by experience but still full of energy and

enthusiasm which has always been the University's hallmark. We are poised to move forward to a new stage of development which I believe will see the University making an even greater contribution to the community.

Today is a very special day for me and for our honorary graduates, to whom I offer my warmest congratulations. It is also a special day for the University since it marks the beginning of our 25th Anniversary and you will see this logo prominently displayed over the next 12 months. We will be celebrating our "Silver Anniversary" with a variety of events including academic seminars, a distinguished lecture series, a student concert and many others. I hope you can join some of these events and celebrate with us our past achievements and learn of our future endeavours.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I formally announce the commencement of the 25th Anniversary celebrations.

Chancellor, Council Chairman, honorary graduates, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that CityU has the drive and ability to achieve more in the future. I am privileged to take up the challenge of leading the University over the next few years and will devote all my energy to ensure that these achievements are realised.

Thank you.
