

## **Classified Post's HR Yearbook 2012**

### **Headline: Innovative training for tomorrow's work place**

#### **Byline: Professor Way Kuo**

Ancient Buddhist murals located deep within a cave complex in Gansu province found an enthralled contemporary audience in Hong Kong thanks to the combination of cutting-edge virtual reality technology and art at a recent exhibition hosted by the School of Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong (CityU).

In a 360-degree panoramic projection theatre, visitors could observe the exquisite brush work of the Tang Dynasty Buddhist art in Cave 220, part of the famous Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang that is no longer open to the public.

Such a project is an innovative example of how universities can train students in the professional skills needed for target growth industries, in this example, the specialised skills needed for organising archaeological exhibitions for museums, digital interpretation and sustainable preservation.

It requires a whole range of expert knowledge and talent in programming, graphic design, art history, cultural management and the environment to make this project possible. In fact, the more interdisciplinary talent and knowledge that you can bring to the table, the better will be your chances of success. That's the message we are sending our students.

At CityU, we know very well that it is our job to produce the necessary talent for the local and regional human resources industry, and the only way to do this is by creating a rich, interdisciplinary learning environment in which students can excel.

For example, we cannot hope to confront the environmental problems the planet faces today by simply studying weather patterns. That's why our School of Energy and Environment focuses on a broad spectrum of fields, from energy science and engineering and energy technology to atmospheric and climate science and environmental legislation and economics. It is essential that the environment and sustainability managers that business, industry and government need today are trained in the totality of energy and environment-related issues.

But at CityU we are not depending on individual colleges, schools and departments to lead the way in this mission to cultivate well-rounded graduates for today's job market. We have overhauled our entire curriculum in the run up to the transition to the 334 education system and made discovery and innovation our focus in all areas of learning.

This means, in practical terms, that every student at CityU in the new 4-year undergraduate structure starting in September of this year will be given the support needed to make an original

discovery during his or her studies. By fostering a student's ability to create new knowledge, communicate it, curate it, and cultivate it for the benefit of society, we believe that we will be producing the kind of graduates who will succeed in today's places of work. This groundbreaking approach frames the entire educational experience at CityU in order to spearhead a new era in interdisciplinary professional education in Hong Kong.

As far as we know, no other university has placed the twin curricular foci of discovery and innovation at the very front of its educational package, and we hope that we can serve as a catalyst for other universities to pursue similar directions.

To advance the new curriculum, we have established new grants and awards for students and academic staff that reward excellence in teaching and learning for the new discovery-enriched curriculum, and we have established new labs and learning spaces in our current and new academic buildings on campus.

We view a university as an interdisciplinary discovery laboratory where students are given the freedom and expert mentoring needed to fulfil their ambitions and interests. Highly motivated, creative and articulate students are likely to become the kind of workers that business and industry need to take their companies forward.

The artists who painted the murals that decorate Cave 220 in Dunhuang could not have imagined in their wildest imaginations that their artwork would be viewed thousands of miles away in a specially configured cinematic experience. But today we know what is possible. We can initiate a fresh approach to the university learning experience by unchaining our imaginations and letting our creative instincts evolve, through discovery and innovation.

(Way Kuo is President of City University of Hong Kong and a member of the US National Academy of Engineering)