

From the President's desk

Making our mark in China's peaceful rise



H K Chang
President and
University Professor

Dear Colleagues,

At the end of March, I led a CityU delegation to Shanghai. The visit came in response to an invitation extended to us in 2002 from Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU). It was delayed due to SARS and other circumstances last year. The trip proved to be both inspiring and sobering.

Within the last two or three years, Shanghai has become even more dazzling. It is more cosmopolitan in outlook and its citizens are definitely more affluent

than before.

Let me digress a little now and offer some personal observations.

I first visited SJTU as a schoolboy in 1948, when an uncle was their professor of metallurgical engineering on the Xujiahui campus, towards the west of the downtown area. In the 1950s, the bulk of the University, including my uncle's department, was moved to Xi'an, resulting in the now well-known Xi'an Jiao Tong University. While still teaching in US, I visited SJTU several times during the 1970s and 1980s, when it underwent a period of revival and expansion. During that time, SJTU acquired a new campus in the Minhang area, on the outskirts of Shanghai. New buildings were constructed, and new disciplines were introduced, such as business management and biomedical engineering, my own specialization. Nonetheless, SJTU was still a far cry from the major North American universities where I taught, in physical scale or intellectual rigor.

In 1997, I made an official visit to SJTU as CityU's President. Already with an impressive campus in the Minhang district, SJTU had begun to acquire another large tract of land nearby to meet its future expansion needs. I was struck by the University's vision and achievements. It was also during this period that CityU established its first collaborative ties with SJTU, most notably in the form of a joint MBA programme. Then, three years ago, on another visit to SJTU, we laid out a collaboration plan, building on our complementary strengths. The intention was sincere, the conditions were nearly ripe. No firm agreement was reached at that time, however. Nevertheless, we maintained very productive cooperations, including their helping us identify and training over scholarship recipients.

In the trip last month, we observed that SJTU has taken yet another big leap towards becoming

a truly great institution. Not only have more new buildings been erected, they have also recruited many newly returned Chinese scholars from foreign countries. There was a palpable intellectual atmosphere on campus. Almost all major universities in the world are considering some kind of collaboration and exchange with SJTU. Because of our long-term partnership, we were most courteously received. I described to the SJTU senior management and academics CityU's admiration and high hopes for deepening collaboration. Yet we would be pragmatic on what would be desirable and achievable. The SJTU top management, equally pragmatic, told us frankly the specific areas they would work with us. The prospects look promising and the details will have to be worked out later.

This Shanghai trip was sobering, because we began to realize that the relative strengths of CityU and SJTU have undergone changes in the past seven years. The higher education landscape on the mainland as a whole has changed rapidly. Since 2002, while we occupied ourselves with the tumultuous issues of budget cuts, etc., the tertiary sector on the mainland in general and SJTU in particular have zoomed ahead into a diverse and multifaceted, growing enterprise. The sector now comprises a range of selective centrally-supported universities, provincial universities, joint colleges with overseas partners and private institutions. All these bode well for China and for the improvement of the overall quality of life of the Chinese people.

Frankly, SJTU has grown at a faster pace than we at CityU have in the past few years. Our sister institution in Shanghai made no secret about its aspirations to become one of the world's leading institutions in the next two decades. This should not discourage us because we have made our own progress as well. We still have advantages that institutions in Shanghai or elsewhere on the Mainland cannot easily match and they know it. We must look carefully at how and what we can cooperate with them. We need to gain a thorough understanding of the situation if we make our own mark in the expansive land of China that is embarking on a peaceful rise. What I hope most for CityU is to be part of this peaceful rise. If we either over-estimate our strengths or underestimate our advantages, we will simply miss out on this historic event and also fail to achieve our aspiration to be recognized as a leading institution in the Asia-Pacific region.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H K Chang".

Promoting a merit-based culture

■ *Shuyee Chen*

At its 16 April meeting, the Management Board agreed to recommend the new salary scales and pay raise system for Council's approval in June. The proposals, to be implemented 1 July 2004, had been developed by the Management Board's Core Group on Staffing Policies to Tackle the Deficit Budget. The new salary scales will apply to staff appointed on or after 1 July 2004. Starting on the same date, a merit-based pay raise system, affecting all existing and future academic and non-academic staff, will also be introduced.



"The aim of the new proposals is to achieve a balance between budget savings and maintaining salary competitiveness for retaining and recruiting staff," said Dr Ellen Ko, Director of the Human Resources Office (HRO) and a member of the Core Group. "More importantly, the University would like to promote a performance-based reward culture, which will be reflected in the new pay raise system." CityU's longstanding, automatic pay raise system will be abolished. In future, only staff with "good" or "outstanding" performance will be awarded half or one increment of the salary scale, with effect on 1 July 2005.

All staff was invited to an open forum on the issues on 14 April after a consultation paper on Proposed New Salary Scales and Pay Raise System was sent to them on 26 March. More than 100 staff members attended the forum, which was organized by HRO and chaired by Dr Ko and four other members of the Core Group.

Merit award culture

Although there was no obvious objection to introducing such a culture, at the forum, concerns were raised and points debated as to how to ensure an objective and transparent mechanism to assess staff performance. In section 8 of the Proposed New Salary Scales and Pay Raise System consultation paper, it is stated, "Pay raise will normally be awarded for good to outstanding performance. Recognition should be given to staff members who take up extra workload, wider and/or higher level

responsibilities." Some staff questioned the meaning of words such as "good," "outstanding," "extra" and "higher." "We support the performance-based evaluation system," said one staff member, "without a set of clear and measurable criteria, however, the system can be abused easily."

Professor Matthew Lee, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Business, and one of the forum speakers, agreed with this point. He also noted that such objective criteria should be incorporated at the beginning of the annual evaluation cycle, so that staff will know exactly what is to be assessed.



As to how to develop a set of reliable criteria for all staff, another speaker, Mr Joseph Chan, Acting Director of Student Development Services, offered that all jobs generally have two elements—qualitative

and quantitative. "In a way, it's easier for more operational or junior levels to use a more quantitative approach." For senior levels, he noted that a more discretionary approach is common in commercial organizations. "It's regarded as motivational and could be useful in judging a higher level of performance." Nevertheless, Mr Chan admitted that "it's extremely difficult," given the broad diversity and the spectrum of job levels, to come to a clear definition of what's "good", "average" or "outstanding".

The need to establish an appeal mechanism was also raised at the forum. According to the proposals, the Approving Committee and the Line Manager are to be the final decision makers for academic and non-academic staff, respectively, in considering a pay raise. There is no opportunity to appeal a case. Staff urged the university to reconsider this, so as to avoid unnecessary office politics. "We need a set of operational framework to ensure that the good intentions of the proposal are implemented and to build a better working environment for all

staff,” another staff member at the forum remarked.

New post titles

According to the original proposals, two new post titles had been planned: Senior Instructor I and II. Their terms of service would have been identical to those of the new Associate Professor and Assistant Professor, respectively. The Core Group’s intention was to create a parallel career path for those staff members who prefer to focus primarily on teaching. A number of staff members at the forum, however, said that the change was not necessary, arguing that the re-titling was a demoralizing downgrade in status. One staff member expressed the view that, with the new role statement, CityU is defined primarily as a “teaching university,” and asked why it would be necessary to downgrade the title of staff doing a job which is more closely aligned to the university’s new role statement.

To this, **Professor Rudolf Wu**, Chair Professor of the Department of Biology and Chemistry and a forum speaker, pointed out that CityU is not primarily a teaching university, according to the UGC statement. “Both research and teaching are part of the University’s mandate,” he said.



Deputy President **Professor David Tong**, Convener of the Core Group, further explained the reasoning behind the proposed title changes. “It’s because, for the self-financing programmes, we may need to hire staff

who exclusively teach. Depending on the circumstances, likely candidates for such positions may include business managers, engineers and computer professionals. They may not mind being given the title Senior Instructor.” Still, he added, there was room for further discussion. In its 16 April meeting, the Management Board decided to reconsider the recommendation on Senior Instructors.

Budget constraints

In his closing remarks at the forum, Professor Tong thanked colleagues for

expressing their views and urged them to face the reality of CityU’s 40% funding cut. This percentage comprises funding withdrawal from associate degree and taught postgraduate programmes, as well as a 10% sector-wide budget cut in 2004–05, and a “0-0-X” percentage cut in 2005–08, where ‘X’ is believed to be no more than 5%. In the future, UGC funding is to be divided into three categories: 65% for undergraduate places consistent with CityU’s Academic Development Proposals, 25 % for research through the Research Assessment Exercise, and 10% based on role-related performance.

“If we fail to do well in any of these three areas, we will not even be able to keep the remaining 60% funding,” Professor Tong said. Some universities, he added, are introducing major or across-the-board salary cuts. “The only way we can avoid this is to do well in all three areas. We need to keep the CityU brand desirable through good teaching and high-quality applied research. Our good brand name will enhance the University’s activities in generating new revenue through self-financing teaching. We have faith in our staff. Let’s stop being inward-looking. Together, let’s work toward building a better university and a better future for all,” Professor Tong urged. ■

Main points of the proposal, to be implemented on 1 July 2004:

1. Revised salary scales will be implemented for those new academic staff and non-academic staff appointed on and after 1 July 2004.
2. The new salary scale for each grade of academic (except for chair professors) or non-academic staff shall specify a range with fixed incremental steps. There will be no automatic increments.
3. A new pay raise system will be introduced, based on the budgetary situation of the University and taking into account performance of the staff.
4. All current staff will remain on the existing scales of their respective grades, but they will be subject to a new pay raise system (and a common incremental date of 1 July). Serving staff on gratuity-bearing contracts can normally retain their existing salary scales corresponding to their grades, when their contracts are renewed.
5. For those serving staff whose current salary has reached the maximum point of their respective scale, there will be no increment/pay raise, except promotion to a higher grade.
6. Associate Professor Scale B and Scale A will be merged into one scale. The Lecturer and the Tutor/Senior Tutor grades will be phased out, with no new appointments to be made in the future.

President speaks on CityU-PolyU collaboration

■ By Peter Ho

*What's going on between CityU and PolyU? Recent news reports almost invariably pointed to one final destination, rather than the process. In order to find out more about the ties developing between the two institutions, and to let staff and students understand more of the background, CityU NewsCentre talked with **Professor H K Chang** on 14 April. Below is an excerpt from the interview:*

Are we talking about deep collaboration or a "merger" between CityU and PolyU? What are the benefits of collaboration?

Every journey begins with the first step. I would say both institutions have just begun to take the first steps towards greater collaboration. No final destination can be precluded at this stage, but the process will be gradual and managed from both sides. When I say "deep collaboration," this is in line with recent policy initiatives proposed by the University Grants Committee and is recorded in our new role statement. Since January, I have been telling staff we need to develop links with our sister institutions in Hong Kong, on the mainland, and elsewhere in the world.

I noted in the February *Linkage* that I see great opportunities for cooperation between CityU and PolyU and Baptist University. CityU and PolyU have a lot of in common, or complementariness, in terms of our history, our physical location, our current academic strengths and applied focus. It is natural that both sides now sit down and talk about further ties.

Is there a timeframe for such increased ties? What has been done? What are the short-term and long-term goals?

The recent talks result from our short-term and long-term needs. In the short-term, we have to find out if there are new or synergistic areas that could provide better educational quality and value to the community we serve—new programmes or joint programmes, for example. These initiatives, we hope, would be eligible for some support from the University Grants Committee (UGC), which has set up the Restructuring and Collaboration Fund for this purpose; the deadline is 12 June. A high-level group, chaired by the deputy presidents of the two universities and comprising senior academic and administrative staff, has been set up for this purpose. So far, we have identified two academic areas and two non-academic areas as pilot projects for exploring and developing collaboration. Four sub-groups have been impanelled to look into these areas

and a report from each group is expected within the next two months, before we decide if we can nominate any project or initiative for funding application to the UGC.

The aim of academic collaboration is to pool our respective strengths and experience so as to deliver programmes that will provide extraordinary value to our students and make unique contributions to the community. Particularly we were thinking about joint taught postgraduate degrees. In the non-academic areas, we are looking for greater efficiency and productivity, providing better value for money and accountability for the public support we receive. We have, in the first instance, identified campus facilities management, and IT student support and administration. A lot of work has to be done in these areas before we know what's feasible or not, but the first steps have been taken. I believe this is something the community will be happy to see.

Will staff and students have a say in the collaboration process? How can their opinions be heard and considered?

I think the process has started, and I will not exclude any eventuality or outcome. But wherever we are going, I think the Council will set the general strategic direction and staff and student input will be sought and considered. Any major institutional decision will be taken in consultation with members of the University community. But until now, no discussion has ever been held on a "merger." It is simply too early in the process to let ourselves be locked into any specific mode of thinking.

What can CityU staff do in this collaboration process?

The UGC has invited all funded institutions to offer ideas and proposals for deep collaboration and a special fund has been set up for this purpose. I think our staff, academic and non-academic alike, should keep their eyes open for potential collaborative projects in their own areas that can clearly demonstrate value. Proposals are welcome through the departments and faculties. ■

A news centre takes off

■ By Peter Ho

Welcome to a new face on the Web. The three-year-old *CityU Today* website, an indispensable source of information about CityU, has retired. In its place is the new and improved *CityU NewsCentre* (<http://www.cityu.edu.hk/newscentre>), committed to reporting “the University’s latest and greatest.”

The front page design is cleaner and more functional. The colours are more soothing to the eyes. The order of the news stories is structured to reflect their timeliness and importance; readers will find it easier to scan for top stories about CityU.

On the news pages, readers will find the stories better presented in the centre column, with an array of page-specific functions (email or print article, polling, etc) aligned on the right. An icon links to the Chinese version of the story, to be posted shortly after the English original appears, or vice versa. The University Publications Office (PUO), which manages the new *NewsCentre*, is committed to an effective bilingual communication strategy. As in the past, readers can find the top stories on the University’s Homepage.

The news is now flanked by a field of functional enhancements. There are interesting “side dishes” to the main news menu: student life, online publications, events calendar, talk of the campus, and the President’s messages. There is more to explore, read and see, including a link to CityU’s video and multimedia archive.

The indexing and search functions have been improved as well. In addition to accessing “news by category” and “news by date,” popular pathways for readers to find out what’s been reported recently, there is an “A-Z index,” which links to a wide selection of CityU departmental pages and topics, arranged alphabetically.



The *NewsCentre* is the result of users’ feedback and internal review, a process that started more than six months ago. The new venture is driven by a web-based content management system that allows better presentation of University news.

Meanwhile, users will be able to access the ‘old’ *CityU Today* site until 1 July 2004, but *CityU Today* has become the nameplate of a new University magazine. What remains unchanged, despite the new look and new technology, is the commitment to bring to our readers the “latest and greatest” about CityU. We hope you like the new website. Readers’ suggestions and comments are most welcome—e-mail: pupeter@cityu.edu.hk ■

<http://www.cityu.edu.hk/newscentre>

ELCO charts its course

■ By Grace Ho

In December 2003, the External Liaison and Cooperation Office (ELCO) was formally established, replacing the former Academic Exchange Office. Dr Zhu Guobin, Associate Professor of the School of Law, was appointed ELCO Director. In addition to its original function of promoting academic exchange, the ELCO will explore developments in the following three areas: adapting to the trend of internationalized education; intensifying cooperation with the Mainland; supporting the "Tripartite Alliance".

At a recent international conference, Professor H K Chang, President, discussed the internationalization of technology research and its significance. From the perspective of a university, internationalized research and internationalized education are inseparable issues. With the globalization of the economy and the influence of different cultures, Professor Chang believed that no country or region could attain a high quality of education and technology research solely by its own efforts. Only through cooperation on an international level, complementing and learning from each other, would CityU be able to catch up with global trends and progress.

Adapting to the trend of internationalized education

With China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the globalization of the economy, many stumbling blocks in the internationalization of higher education have been removed. Local educational institution should work with their counterparts in the Mainland as well, in order to enhance our influence beyond Hong Kong's borders. By promoting more academic and student exchanges, the ELCO will help the University achieve its goal of becoming an internationalized higher education institution. As more overseas students come to our campus, the University will review and provide appropriate resources and services. In line with this, the ELCO will continue to promote international cooperation with other institutions, and internal joint efforts among staff and students.

Intensifying cooperation with the Mainland

Capitalizing on the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the ELCO will intensify its cooperation with academic institutions and research centres across the border. It will actively promote specific collaborations with a wider scope and diversified format,

such as joint degree programmes, short-term training courses and technology research projects. As a mediator, the ELCO will not only communicate and work closely with CityU's academic departments, but also offer advice to colleagues on rules and regulations in cooperating with Mainland counterparts. Dr Zhu stated that the ELCO is setting as a priority the examination of possibilities for further development with existing partners on the Mainland. "We will listen to our colleagues' opinions, and work closely with them for the methodical development of our plans."

Supporting the "Tripartite Alliance"

Initiated by President Chang himself, the "tripartite alliance" among our School of Creative Media, the School of Cinema-Television of University of Southern California and the Beijing Film Academy is reaching full swing. The alliance stems from Professor Chang's extensive understanding of the different cultures of the three places and his belief in creating an "win-win-win" situation.

With a bi-cultural and bi-lingual tradition, Hong Kong possesses unique strengths. However, Hong Kong cannot be truly successful if it is isolated from the Mainland. As an international finance centre situated at the intersection of the East and the West, Hong Kong naturally has been regarded as a bridge between the Mainland and the world. This underpins the concept of the "tripartite alliance," which promotes equal partnership among the Mainland, Hong Kong and overseas countries.

In the past, Hong Kong has worked closely with academic institutes in Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia, but has seldom done so with countries in Europe and Southeast Asia. However, there are many distinguished universities in countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Japan and India. In future, the ELCO will try to diversify cooperation with various countries and act as a mediator for CityU's work with new partners. The ELCO, according to Dr Zhu, is a small department with limited resources and capabilities, but it will take initiatives to liaise with various departments with a view to strengthening ties between CityU and institutions around the world. ■



Recently ...



Professor H K Chang, President, welcomed special guests from the Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, led by Commissioner Mr Yang Wenchang.

17 March



Swire Coca-Cola Hong Kong Ltd donated HK\$100,000 to CityU's Smart Asset Management Laboratory, in support of its unique equipment fault diagnosis and prognosis system—Smart Asset Maintenance System.

mid-March

An international symposium, "China and Southeast Asia: Challenges, opportunities and the reconstruction of Southeast Asian Chinese ethnic capital" was co-organized by CityU's Southeast Asia Research Centre and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Xiamen University.

24–25 March



China's Ministry of Education delegation comprising representatives from the Office for Hongkong, Macao and Taiwan Affairs: Ms Ding Yu Qiu, Deputy Director; Mr Li Da Guang, and Song Lei, Programme Officer; was received by President Professor H K Chang and Deputy President Professor David Tong.

29 March



A "Hanbok Exhibition" opened in CityU's Run Run Shaw Library with a dynamic and potent demonstration of the traditional Korean martial art, Tae Kwon Do.

29 March



Fifty academics and supporting administrators met at a workshop "Towards a Learner-centred Undergraduate Education," co-organized by the Education Development Office and Quality Assurance Committee.

26 March



Upcoming ...

Technology Transfer Forum 2003–04: Advances in Structural Engineering for Cost Saving

2:30pm–5:30pm, 21 May, Hong Kong Productivity Council

Enquiries: 3442 6822

Exhibition: Early Hong Kong Eateries

10am–7pm, 9 April–12 May, CityU Gallery,
Level 6 Amenities Building

Enquiries: 3442 6493

International Conference on Youth Empowerment: A Cross-cultural Exchange

17–20 May, Wei Hing Theatre

Enquiries: 2788 8700

Long serving staff series

Contemplating the 20th Anniversary

■ *By John Dockerill*

There have been so many changes in CityU over the past 20 years that it is difficult to single out one major change. Perhaps I may take this opportunity to reflect upon two of the major changes that I have seen since I began working here in 1984.

The first concerns the students and our approach to teaching and learning. In the early days we inherited, very much, the ethos of the Hong Kong Polytechnic, which had its roots in the old Hong Kong Technical College. As a consequence, the emphasis in our programmes, all Higher Diplomas at that time, was geared to producing graduates that had skills that could be immediately useful to their potential employers. In essence a case of "fitting round pegs into round holes", with programme curricula dominated by the specific needs of industry and commerce. This can be a successful policy in the short term, but we all know that this approach can limit the potential development of the individual in the longer term; particularly in an era when changes in society and the economy are so rapid and deep-seated.

When we look at our programmes today we see a fundamental shift in our approach. Although we still reflect the needs of the commerce and industry, we strive to give our students a more generic education and to prepare them for a lifelong career which will see them changing their jobs, and even professions, several times. We also emphasize whole person development, which strives to develop skills in the students which cannot be taught in the classroom or learned from books. Such attributes as leadership, social responsibility, motivation, and so on. This is a change I clearly see as one of the major differences in the Institution, which slowly developed in the early years and has really taken off over the past five years.

Our typical student has also changed. In the early years, opportunities for study at degree level were very limited with less than 10% of the age cohort able to enter the Universities or the Polytechnics. The quality of intake, in terms of HKALE scores, was therefore much higher, the number of graduates much smaller and career opportunities for our graduates much better.

The second major change I see from the very early days, particularly in the first year or so, is in the management and administration. When we started in January 1984, we were just a handful of staff. There were no committees, no organizational structure and very few, if any, administrative procedures. This was a time of real empowerment when decisions had to be taken quickly, largely by individuals, to keep up with the timetable for the launching of the first programmes. It was an exhilarating time, never to be repeated, of course, as the formal structures came into place. These are now fully developed both in terms of the management and the committee structures. Decisions and new developments take much longer, but have the advantage of more general consultation and input. Nonetheless, I cannot help reflecting on those heady early days and sometimes feel we should try to establish a balance between the two extremes.

In 2004, we live in an even more dynamic world than the 1980s and I believe we need to streamline our decision making processes to keep up with the changing demands we face. Perhaps this is one of the important challenges that face the University as it moves into the 21st century. ■

Mr John Dockerill's post titles at City Polytechnic of Hong Kong / City University of Hong Kong:

- Associate Director (Resources Planning)
- Director of Planning
- Vice-President for Planning and Information Services
- Special Assistant to the President
- Provisional Provost
- Secretary to Council

