

Deep collaboration

What will it bring?

■ By Shuyee Chen, Karen Lai, Regina Lau

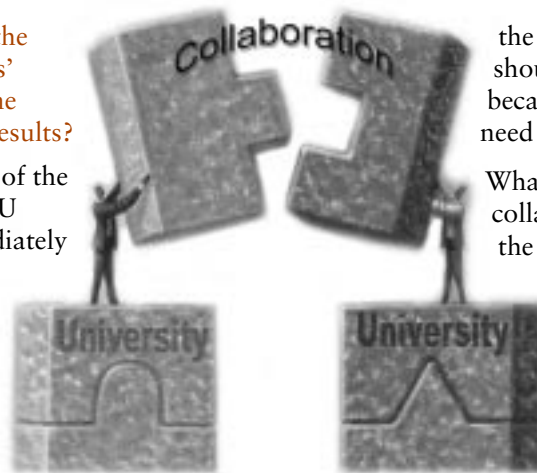
In August 2003, the University Grants Committee (UGC) proposed the integration of universities. And in early March this year, the UGC took measures to actively encourage all local universities to implement “deep collaboration”. In responding to the UGC’s request, CityU representatives met with representatives of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and the Hong Kong Baptist University to explore the possibility of deep collaboration with these institutions. In mid-April, Sir Gordon Wu, CityU’s Council Chairman, expressed his views to the media about a merger of CityU and PolyU, which generated a lot of interest from the public and within the University. However, as University President Professor H K Chang said: “Every journey begins with the first step”. (See *Linkage* issue 231.) While Senior Management does not rule out the possibility of a merger with another university, integration with other universities starts with “deep collaboration.”

To encourage colleagues and students to discuss the issue and to further understand the background, progress and the problems in approaching “deep collaboration,” *Linkage* held a roundtable discussion on 28 April. Invited participants included Professor Ron Hui, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering, Professor Matthew Lee, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Business, Mr Charles Wong, Director of School of Continuing and Professional Education, Dr John Tse, Chairman of Staff Association (absent) and Mr Kelvin Chan, Chairman of the CityU Students’ Union. Mr Peter Ho, Acting Director of the University Publications Office, chaired the discussion. Following is an excerpt of the discussion in which the speakers expressed their personal views.

Ho: Do the universities really need the “deep collaboration”? The Students’ Union seems to have done an on-line survey on this issue. What are the results?

Chan: We only got to hear the news of the proposed merger of CityU and PolyU when reporters called us. We immediately did a survey over the Internet. Approximately 3,000 students have responded so far. Results show that 70% to 80% of them are optimistic, but, they are also concerned that the quality of education might be affected adversely. Generally speaking, our fellow students feel that, be it a deep collaboration or a merger, they will have more choices open to them. A merger could bring about chances for streamlining and promote competitiveness. What they are most concerned about isn’t the timetable, but whether or not we are adequately prepared. It is said that the majority of PolyU students there are in favor of the proposed merger.

Lee: The external environment is ever more competitive, resources increasingly scarce and students under greater pressures, so how do we enhance CityU’s competitiveness? One way to do it is to work closely with a partner and create a win-win situation for both parties. All the universities in the world face these same challenges. They are also adopting a partnering strategy in order to cope, whether it is called “deep collaboration”, a “strategic partnership”, “federation”, or a “merger”. In fact, they are all based on benefits to both university partners and increased efficiency. This is



the right course of development, but we shouldn’t merge two universities just because it is a global trend. Many details need to be worked out.

What the UGC means by “deep collaboration” is restructuring—meaning the merger of the departments of the two universities concerned. If it is not done properly, not only will the merger be unsuccessful, but it also will have a great many undesirable repercussions.

After the UGC redefined the roles of CityU and PolyU, our vision and roles became very similar and we probably would be better off working together to achieve our common goals. But what are the goals of collaboration? The Management’s goal might be cutting costs. The goal of some colleagues could be to launch new world-class programmes through collaboration. If the priorities are unclear, there will be great difficulties to face in collaborating. If the Senior Managements don’t reach a consensus and everything is done on an ad hoc basis, the merger process will take a long time. Restructuring will certainly impact the status quo. But if everyone is clear about what the long-term commitment is, they will be less resistant to changes. Simply put, a merger must be fully thought out and planned with a view to the long-term; people need to be widely consulted and all the stakeholders need to reach a consensus.

Hui: I think we should try to avoid talking about who’s going to win and who’s going to lose as a result of a

merger. We ought to be broad-minded; we ought to trust and respect each other before we can have any meaningful negotiation. I think that possibly the purpose behind the UGC promoting “deep collaboration” is that the Government would like to accommodate more students by using existing resources. By this means, the Government will not bear the financial burden of switching the universities’ degree programmes from three years to four years.

Playing a role in the region

Wong: I read the UGC’s report on Hong Kong Higher Education Integration Matters (March 2004) over again. The report suggests five models for integration and explains the need for it. Its explanation is that current society is changing rapidly and everybody must adjust to the changes, including the schools.

As we all know, the competition among Hong Kong universities is acute. But in recent years the mainland Chinese universities have been making great strides. For the sake of our own survival, let alone beating those mainland Chinese universities, we shouldn’t compare ourselves only with local universities. Instead, we should seek to cooperate with other local universities and seek our survival in the region. I think this is the major motive for the UGC to suggest university integration.

The report talks about how we can survive in the region through collaboration with each other. Then it suggests five models of integration, from status quo, through loose affiliation, deep collaboration, and federation, to merger. But because the UGC offers HK\$200 million to encourage “deep collaboration”, everybody is keen on doing that. And what the UGC means by “deep collaboration” requires signing a legal contract. Of course, it is a very positive thing.

Ho: In what forms can deep collaboration be carried out?



Charles Wong

Wong: The report says that it can be done through, for instance, the libraries—if two university libraries merged it would save a great deal of money, while the space and the number of books would be vastly increased.

Lee: If we’re talking about a structural merger, then do we need two finance offices? Or, if our schools or faculties can be merged, why should we have two faculties of business or science and engineering? Isn’t one enough?

Ho: If that’s the case, then what can’t be merged? Isn’t that turning into a full-scale merger?

Lee: That’s exactly the point. In fact, the five models represent a gradual progression leading to a full-scale merger. However, we are only at the stage of exploring deep collaboration. Once you’ve developed deep

collaboration in each department, you’re already, in effect, merging the two universities.

Wong: I think we should ask ourselves what the purpose is of promoting deep collaboration. Are we only talking about saving money? Or do we hope to compete with hinterland universities?



Mr Kelvin Chan

Lee: Do the various universities have very different agendas when they carry out deep collaboration? My feeling is that if Hong Kong’s tertiary education doesn’t shake itself up, our role will be marginalized in five years.



Professor Ron Hui

Hui: That’s why we need to understand the real motives of the Government. If CityU’s Faculty of Science and Engineering merges with PolyU’s, it will certainly be the top of all Hong Kong universities. Would that be acceptable to the UGC? If so, the deep collaboration or merger between CityU and PolyU is a golden opportunity for either of us to repackage ourselves and create a new image as the “MIT” of Hong Kong. But the prerequisite is that the Government must be prepared to give us free rein to do it and not further cut our budgets.

Lee: Look at the university ranking survey (conducted by the Hong Kong Professional Education Website and Hong Kong University Public Opinion Research Programs). CityU ranks first in teaching, third in research and fifth among the eight funded universities. However, if we recognize that both teaching and research are essential to a university, why were we ranked fifth overall? Was it because the public and stakeholders failed to see our real strengths? Are we not supposed to be outstanding in research work? Council Chairman Sir Gordon Wu’s reply to a colleague made one feel that research isn’t important to CityU. To him, it seems, CityU is primarily a teaching university and the academics can do a little research work to supplement their teaching. That’s all. I was disappointed to hear that. The quality of our teaching and research has improved, but, now, the momentum seems rather difficult to maintain. Without the UGC’s support, our strengths will not be sustainable.

Creating a strategic vision

Ho: Is deep collaboration between CityU and PolyU the solution?

Wong: Now that it’s already an official policy and everybody’s beginning to do it, we should be practical about it. Everyone ought to check it out, and they’ll find that things never thought possible in the past are reality today and can be made doable by joint effort. I find it absolutely a good thing.

Lee: Nevertheless, I feel strongly that the Management of

the two universities must come up with a strategic vision for the merger first. If not, it will create a great conflict of interest.

Hui: At this initial stage, the Senior Managements of both universities must consider some long-term problems. If they can discuss what they see coming further down the road, the results should be very different.



Professor Matthew Lee

Lee: However, right now we are not even clear about what the priorities are. If we ask the two campus service offices to discuss the possibility of collaboration at this point, they may think that the purpose is to cut spending and staff. If the purpose isn't cutting resources, but about supplying better and more value-added services, then these offices will certainly lend

their support.

Hui: If the Government is giving an opportunity to our colleagues to excel in either teaching or research, and to share in the UGC's great vision, and is letting us see the Government's sincerity, I believe many of our colleagues

will be more than willing to collaborate.

Ho: Finally, in what way do you think discussion about this issue among our colleagues and students will be less likely go wrong?



Mr Peter Ho

Lee: If the consultation is done on ad hoc basis each time, things will go wrong. I think the most important point is to share a common vision of the future. Both universities should hammer out a mutually agreeable vision of the future first and widely consult the opinion of the staff, students and stakeholders. Then we can talk about how to implement the plan.

The universities concerned must respect a few fundamental principles. First, the Management should make it clear that the process is on a voluntary basis; that it won't force any units to merge. Secondly, the Management should also make it clear that there won't be any loss of jobs caused by deep collaboration. If the Management makes these commitments first, I think resistance will be reduced. ■

From the President's desk

Building stronger communication

Dear Colleagues,

On 1 May, a few members of the Council and the Management gathered in the Board Room of the Cheng Yick-chi Building for a special meeting on some work at hand. For me, it wasn't just a Saturday and a public holiday (Labour Day), it was also the eighth anniversary of my joining CityU as the President.

Eight years may sound like a long time. When I was a boy, I learned about the hardship of the "eight years of resistance against the Japanese invasion" (1937-1945) and realized that much can take place in eight years. However, surprisingly, as CityU made great strides almost without anybody noticing, I have been at CityU for eight years now. On 1 May, I could not help but look back to draw useful lessons for CityU's future and look forward to what lies ahead.

I have worked at six universities in my 35-year academic career, since 1969. Undoubtedly, CityU is the academic institution for which I will have served as an academic the longest, and, obviously, it is the last. It's only natural that my feelings for this university are stronger than for the others.

In 1995, CityU was officially recognized as a University. The following year, I left my post as Dean of the School of Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh to join CityU. In order to stay low-key and make everything as simple as possible, I didn't spend any time preparing for the inauguration ceremony, nor did I have an inauguration banquet. I simply took advantage of a previously scheduled award-presentation ceremony to deliver my inauguration speech. I think it was befitting of a new university of humble origins and consistent with my own desire to concentrate my efforts on academic and administrative affairs.

Nevertheless, I clearly remember suggesting that we needed to strive for academic excellence, and that we needed to pay more attention to accountability. I concluded my speech by quoting an ancient Chinese scholar: *Who is the sage Shun? Who is the sage Yu? Anyone who serves the people well can also be a sage.* In keeping with this sentiment, I always do my best, hoping that I will one day be as good as those who came before me. Likewise, I don't envy other institutions that have received more recognition. As long as we work hard to strive for excellence in teaching and research, I believe our hard work will be recognized eventually.

Looking back, I feel quite satisfied with the development of the University as a whole. As early as the mid-1990s, the University's programmes were quite rigid and the credit unit system was not yet in place. Whole-person education was a concept not then reflected in the curriculum. Although we had a strong foundation in teaching, we didn't have as much standing as we recently have obtained in the Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review. Our research endeavours were still tentative and had not attracted the attention of the research community in the academic world.

The first five-year strategic plan I proposed, known as the AURORA Strategy, from 1997 to 2002, set the direction for the next phase of development for CityU. According to the plan, we appointed five Vice-Presidents to lead the University forward in different areas. This proved to be a successful path for us to have embarked upon. In 1996, CityU was given a HK\$1.6 billion budget. However, because of our outstanding performance in teaching and research and because of our new initiatives, such as the Chinese Civilisation Centre, the English Language Centre and the School of

Creative Media, in 2002 the University Grants Committee gave us a budget of HK\$2.4 billion. It was an increase of 50% over six years, even though the number of our staff and students remained much the same.

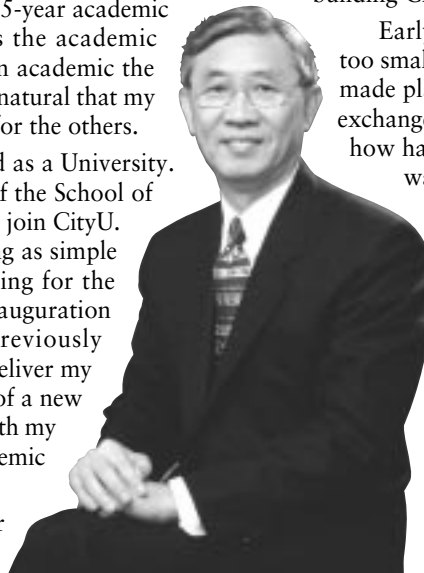
Indeed, what has continually driven me to overcome obstacles through the years is the memory of when I first arrived at CityU. For four semesters in a row, I visited about ten students' families each semester. The parents of these students were generally not very highly educated. But their great expectations for their children to contribute to the family and to society made me feel the heavy responsibility of an educator and proud of my role. That's why I remind my colleagues that students must come first in any decision we make for the University. This has also made us successful in building CityU as a learner-centred institution.

Early in my tenure, I also recognized that our campus is too small and too much like a shopping mall in design. So we made plans to make this a place better suited for intellectual exchange and activities for our staff and students. No matter how hard we try, it's simply impossible for us to have stone walls covered in ivy and vast campus grounds, but I feel a sense of satisfaction whenever I walk through the campus now.

About two years ago, I began to realize that no matter how hard I worked or how many meetings I held with students and staff, I, alone, could not accomplish all that remains to be accomplished and solve all the problems the University confronts. Thus, in 2002, I recommended that the Council appoint a Deputy President in charge of academic affairs so that I could concentrate my efforts on the issues that require my attention the most, such as setting the general direction, formulating policies, overseeing resources, obtaining the maximum resources for the University, and helping the University gain the recognition we deserve.

Meanwhile, in order to simplify the administrative structure, I also reduced the number of Vice-Presidents from five to three.

I'm sure my ninth year at CityU will go by even faster than the last eight. But this year and the subsequent few years are of critical importance to the future of CityU. I will work even harder, especially in the area of communication, both with the community-at-large and within our University. My annual visits to departments and offices have become a ritual and serve less and less purpose. My random drop-ins at the student canteen also don't help much to connect me with students. So, other than writing to you every month, as I have been doing in the past several years, I hope I can also speak with staff and students regularly and directly via public forums and on video. This way, everybody can directly see and listen to me and the distance between us will be shortened. Of course, what I need most is to learn more about what my colleagues think. Therefore, in the ninth year of my Presidency, I would like to create one occasion where colleagues can share their views on the University's affairs with me in an informal way. I believe our colleagues must have their own ideas on how to keep CityU thriving. I hope when the time is ripe you will accept my invitation. Let's discuss CityU affairs over a cup of tea as a substitute for wine. Let's converse about Hong Kong's tertiary education and about CityU like good friends.



H K Chang
President and University Professor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H K Chang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

On academic planning

■ By Regina Lau

CityU Vice President (Undergraduate Education) Professor Edmond Ko, talked to *Linkage* about academic planning, after the University Grants Committee (UGC) made an announcement on 10 May concerning the Academic Development Proposals (ADPs) submitted by the eight UGC-funded institutions for the 2005–08 triennium. CityU's proposal to make creative media a growth/priority area was endorsed. Out of the 840 second year intake top-up places that UGC allocated to the eight institutions, CityU received 210 places, the second largest number. The UGC has also endorsed CityU's proposal to start two new undergraduate programmes: one on Criminology, and another on the Teaching of English. The latter will be a joint programme with the Hong Kong Institute of Education.



Professor Edmond Ko

What is a growth/priority area as mentioned in the UGC announcement?

Each institution recommends growth/priority areas in its ADP submitted to the UGC. A growth area is by definition an area that will make significant contributions to Hong Kong society, and to which a university will allocate more of its resources. Taking into account the Government's advice on Hong Kong's future development, and its specific manpower requirements for certain professionals, we recommended that more student places be allocated to the area of creative media. It is widely accepted that our School of Creative Media (SCM) has been nurturing talented graduates who are making unique contributions to Hong Kong.

As recommended by the UGC, the first-year first degree places will remain unchanged for the 2005–08 triennium. What are the implications for the University's overall academic development and planning?

We asked for an extra 100 first-year first degree places in our ADP. We have also voiced our aspiration to increase the creative media student intake—that has been endorsed. Now that the UGC advises our overall first-year first degree places to remain unchanged, that means we need to adjust the overall student intake among faculties/schools. The redistribution of student places will be done in a way that is consistent with what we originally proposed in our ADP.

What about the extra 210 places the UGC has allocated for our second-year intake? Are you happy about the quota?

Though the first-year intake remains the same, the second-year intake has increased; so the overall enrolment has expanded. I feel particularly encouraged by the increase in the second-year quota; that means we will have greater scope to develop our Associate Degree (AD) articulation

programmes. It should be noted that the 210 top-up places are open to all AD students in Hong Kong and admission will be based on merit. This is consistent with our enrolment policy in the past few years. Out of the total 840 second-year places that the UGC allocates to all eight funded institutions, our portion, amounting to one quarter of the allocation, is the second biggest. This is an acknowledgement of our experience and achievements in the AD articulation programmes.

What is the time frame for implementing the proposed ADP?

Now that the UGC has endorsed our direction and specified our student intake, major changes on the proposed ADP will not be likely. Professor H K Chang, University President, Professor David Tong, the Deputy President, and I have met the Core Group of the UGC twice, discussing in detail the principles in allocating student places among the various faculties/schools such as: demand, as indicated by student enrolment in the past few years; whether it is a growth area, like logistics and IT, as indicated by the Government; and whether the allocation is consistent with the new role statement the UGC has defined for our University. After some fine-tuning on the allocation, we will submit student load matrices to the UGC for funding assessment on 5 June.

What are the implications on funding for the 2005–08 triennium?

If we look at funding from the perspective of student enrolment, I would say that I am cautiously optimistic about our prospects. Since it is clear now that our undergraduate enrolment will not drop—in fact, it will grow by 420 for the second- and third-year intakes—I think the funding scenario is likely to be quite stable. After all, funding is related to the number of student places. ■

Tributes to caring teachers

■ By Karen Lai, Shirley Lam

“Today my beloved teachers stood beside many other teachers to celebrate the 2003–2004 Teaching Excellence Awards ceremony. Seeing them smiling on the stage, I started to reminisce about their humour-filled teaching methods, and their encouragement when I experienced difficulties in learning,” said Catherine Lee Pui-ling, a first year student from the Department of English and Communication.



Mr David Santandreu

The Teaching Excellence Awards (TEA) plaque reminds many students and alumni of the joys and difficulties they experienced while under the tutelage of their teachers at university. The TEA announcement and plaque unveiling ceremony held on 30 April marked the University’s recognition of the devotion and the hard work of outstanding teachers. With five more names added to the plaque, the total number of TEA recipients is 59. The plaque, now located at the main entrance of the Academic Building, reaffirms the University’s ongoing commitment to teaching excellence.



Dr Joan Leung

This year’s award winners are: **Dr Kevin Downing**, Senior Lecturer, Division of Social Studies; **Dr Mohamed Khalifa**, Associate Professor, Department of Information Systems; **Dr Joan Leung**, Associate Professor, Department of Public and Social Administration; **Mr David Santandreu**, Lecturer, Division of Language Studies; and **Professor Lilian Vrijmoed**, Department of Biology and Chemistry.



Dr Mohamed Khalifa

Recognizeable success

Mr Santandreu, who teaches French courses, was awarded for his well rounded approach to teaching and learning. He motivates his students to learn by constantly creating new teaching strategies and challenging his students. Dr Kevin Downing was commended for his contributions to the development of blended learning with the innovative use of technology. He said the award should belong to the colleagues who worked with him and thanked the University for its dedication to promoting quality teaching. Dr Joan Leung’s sustained commitment to teaching received recognition. She believes that teaching and learning are complementary, and she has improved in the process of teaching her students. In addition to



Professor Lilian Vrijmoed



Dr Kevin Downing



advancing students’ knowledge, she believes that teachers should also be caring. “Teaching with the mind and heart is important,” she said.

Two recipients, Dr Khalifa and Professor Vrijmoed, received the TEA for the second time. Both reflected that teaching excellence is a continuous process that they will never give up. “My improvement in the past years, I believe, is based on what I went through during my last TEA exercise,” Dr Khalifa said. Dr Vrijmoed concurred that quality teaching is an essential task in order for the University to sustain its competitiveness and strive for excellence.

TEA selection process

Launched in 1993–94, the TEA selection process has become increasingly rigorous through the years. In addition to internal academic and staff representatives, the Selection Panel included two external members: **Ms Denise Chalmers**, Director, Teaching and Educational Development Institute, University of Queensland, and **Professor K P Mohanan**, Deputy Director, Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning, National University of Singapore. They served as international benchmarks for the high quality of teachers in CityU. “The five can be regarded as teachers of outstanding quality by international standards,” said **Professor S Kitipornchai**, Panel Chair of the TEA.

Officiating at the TEA plaque unveiling ceremony, **Professor H K Chang**, University President, emphasized the importance of maintaining the momentum of a culture of quality teaching and learning, and reiterated his strong support for quality education at CityU. “The plaque reminds us that CityU is a centre of learning and teaching... Nobody has better represented that spirit than the names we see here,” he said. ■

Long serving staff series

A man for all seasons

■ By Paul Chun-kuen Kwong

Mr Arthur Tat-yung Leung, Director of Campus Planning at the Campus Planning Office, has been with CityU for 20 years. Educated in Hong Kong and England and qualified as an architect, Mr Leung has practiced in London and Hong Kong. He is also a Certified Facility Manager by the International Facilities Management Association. Mr Leung joined the University shortly after it was established and he now oversees CityU's space allocation and inventory, the planning and development of capital projects, and the design and contract administration of all changes to existing properties and physical plants. In this interviews Mr Leung looks back, and forward...

Arthur, how did you get started with CityU 20 years ago?

It was August 1984, at the Hong Kong Polytechnic in Hunghom, . . .

How was it that you as "City" staff were working in the "Poly"?

We didn't even have our own offices. When I joined the City Poly team, there were only a few of us and we were attached to the offices of our "Poly" counterparts. It was like that until December, when we moved into our offices at Mongkok Tower One. Then Tower Two. Then Yau Yat Tsuen. We became a university in 1995.

What has been the most memorable event in the past 20 years?

The day in the fall of 1989 just before classes began. We had to move all the furniture from the Mongkok campus here. By midnight our workers were still hanging whiteboards in the classrooms for use in the morning. Morning came and over 2000 students were able to attend their classes on the new campus without delays.

Good for you!

Not to my credit. The credit goes to all the staff. That's the product of "can-do" team spirit—what I like to call the "DNA of CityU".

From Hunghom to Yau Yat Tsuen, moving around has been a way of life then.

I must have moved nine times or more! CityU grows and we move.

Talking about growth... at what stage do you reckon CityU's current growth is?

Adolescence.

What?

Yes. We are still in that rebellious stage experimenting with new things. We may want to direct its growth; yet up to a point, we have to let it break out and grow in its own way.

How do you take the impact made by the new Council Chairman?

I embrace the changes that are to come. In my 20 years with CityU, I have been through many unexpected turns of events like this. I am excited by the coming challenges.

Why?

Because I draw satisfaction from the completion of projects. More changes, more projects, and greater satisfaction. The worst attitude is that of civil servants who dread change. We CityU folk should not be like that.

With the construction of the College and the implementation of the four year curriculum, CityU will change a lot.

But I think the "DNA of CityU" will not change so fast. It is our collective growth experience, through years of joy and pain, ups and downs. Things happen because of the confluence of three factors: The right time, the right environment, and the right people. You can't expect things to change your ways overnight.

What about the "marriage" with PolyU?

The aforementioned three factors must be in place or it won't happen. It will take time. Ten years? Who knows. CityU is but

a microcosm of Hong Kong. We are set to weather big changes secondary to Hong Kong's own integration with Shenzhen, and with the whole of Pearl River Delta into a big metropolis, not unlike London and New York.

Can you give an example that's relevant to CityU?

Our office just made a quick calculation and we found that after some years, there will probably be more degree places that are self-funded than those that are UGC-funded.

Within CityU, what trends are encouraging and satisfying to you?

I really feel proud of our University's Philharmonic Orchestra, Chinese Orchestra, Choir, and many arts and cultural activities. They make us unique among the local universities. Apart from projecting a good public image, they give parents the message that CityU is not a place just for their children to take classes.

Do you enjoy music? And what do you do for relaxation?

I wish I had taken piano lessons when I was young. These days I go to concerts and performances frequently. I played soccer regularly more than ten years ago.

As a 20-year "City veteran", what advice would you offer?

We are better off when we take time out, preferably alone, to reflect and to do things we truly enjoy. One time I rented a house in the countryside and stayed there alone. For seven days I walked about and drew numerous sketches.

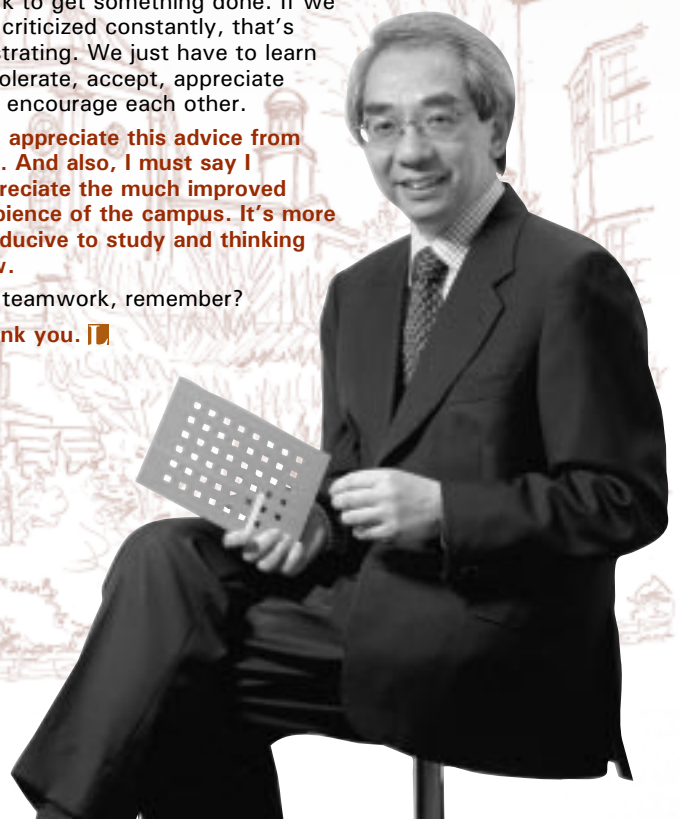
A few more words of wisdom?

Let's express our appreciation of each other more often. We, I mean those of us with a Chinese upbringing, tend to criticize too readily. You know it takes a lot of work to get something done. If we get criticized constantly, that's frustrating. We just have to learn to tolerate, accept, appreciate and encourage each other.

I do appreciate this advice from you. And also, I must say I appreciate the much improved ambience of the campus. It's more conducive to study and thinking now.

It's teamwork, remember?

Thank you. ☺





A sip of comfort

■ By Regina Lau

To **Winnie Ma** and **Jessica Leung**, colleagues from the Campus Planning Office and the Facilities Management Office, there is no better way to relieve a day's stress than a sip of soothing Chinese soup, rich in nutrients and free from artificial flavors.

Winnie: The soup delivery service offered by some vendors is ideal for a soup lover like me who is too busy to prepare it myself. I order Chinese soup regularly, on-line or through the telephone. The price is quite reasonable, considering the many medicinal ingredients contained in the broth.

Of the 20 or so varieties available in a weekly menu, the one with clams and dates is my favourite. It tastes really sweet and rich and natural. The broth comes in a flask that fills two big cups. That is too much for my consumption alone, so I always share with my colleagues or bring some home. Sometimes, I may get new soup ideas from the menu to try at home.

Jessica: There are many benefits attributed to Chinese soup, such as the removal of excessive heat, humidity and toxins from the body, moisturizing the skin and strengthening the immune system. By and large, I like soup simply because it makes me feel good. The soup I order from the vendor tastes like the soup prepared by my mother—as sweet, as fresh. It makes me feel “at home”. Now that I have a family of my own and do not often have the chance to enjoy my mom's great soup anymore, the soup I order serves as a welcome alternative.



Jessica Leung (left) and Winnie Ma.
梁淑嫻 (左) 與馬麗雲。

減壓的老火湯

■ 劉淑君

校園規劃處的**馬麗雲**和物業及設施管理處的**梁淑嫻**同事，均覺得呷一口材料豐富、不含味精的老火湯，最能舒緩工作及生活中的壓力。

馬麗雲：「對我這類愛喝老火湯又沒有時間親自煲的人來說，湯水送遞服務真是恩物。通過網上或電話落訂，湯水送遞公司便會在午飯時間前把湯送到辦公室，十分方便。價錢方面，以湯中的份量甚足及多元化的材料看來，還算合理。我最喜愛象拔蚌煲蜜棗豬月展，真的很甜、很鮮味。一壺湯足足倒出

兩碗，我一個人喝不完，會分給同事或帶回家讓家人享用。一個星期的湯單有 20 多個湯款，給我很多自製湯水的靈感——如果我有時間的話。」

梁淑嫻：「經常喝湯水的好處數之不盡，包括清熱、解毒、去濕、美肌等，然而，我個人喜愛喝老火湯的原因很簡單，只因感覺很舒服。送遞公司的湯水跟我媽媽煲的有幾分相似，有一種好像回到家裡的感覺。結婚後不是經常喝到媽媽煲的老火湯，有送遞公司的湯水也算聊勝於無。」