

Focus

A boost applied research and graduate studies

■ By Shirley Lam



Professor Roderick Wong

CityU's applied research and postgraduate studies are set to scale new heights under the direction of **Chair Professor Roderick Wong**, Dean of Research and Graduate Studies.

Professor Wong, who is also Director of the Liu Bie Ju Centre for Mathematical Sciences, assumed the deanship in October 2004 and took charge of matters relating to research, applied work and postgraduate programmes, which are under the remit of the Research Grants Office, the Technology Transfer Office and the School of Graduate Studies. He plans to bolster applied research activities with more recognition and support and to strengthen graduate studies with more collaborative arrangements.

CityU emphasizes both teaching and research. On the research front, the University focuses on applied research with a view to supporting various industries. "We hope we can contribute to strengthening our professional knowledge and skills in order to enhance our competitiveness in the face of ever-changing demands from the market," said Professor Wong. Indeed, this is also set out in the *Strategic Plan 2003-2008*, which identified focusing resources on priority areas of applied research as one of the core tasks of the University. This will become even more important given the University Grants Committee's new role statement for CityU, which emphasizes applied research and the maintenance of strong links with business and the community.

A good track record

Over the years, CityU staff members have engaged in a variety of applied research projects involving all academic disciplines. "The research projects are practical, result-oriented and truly beneficial to society," said Professor Wong. They cover a wide spectrum of work including the development of base station antennas for wireless communications, studies of coastal pollution for environmental protection, advancement in nanotechnology and materials science, language engineering research with applications in the development of an Internet search engine, studies of corporate governance and youth policies in Hong Kong, and the development of the property price index. Some of them have spin-off companies like TeleEye Holdings Ltd, which was listed on Hong Kong's Growth Enterprise Market in 2001, making CityU the first local higher education institution to have nurtured a technology company from start-up to public listing.

"The keys to success owe much to the fact that the subject disciplines at CityU are basically application-

oriented," said Professor Wong. "What is as important is that CityU has teams of high-calibre, innovative academics and researchers who are dedicated to promoting applied research that will benefit society."

The strong link between CityU and industry is also significant. Through initiatives such as the Industrial Attachment Scheme (IAS) and collaborative work, faculties and schools have built up connections with industry, which Professor Wong said can be drawn on to strengthen technology transfer activities. "The ultimate goal of emphasizing applied research is to transfer the research results to industry and businesses, and help them enhance their competitiveness. It is therefore crucial for researchers to have a good understanding of the needs of the potential users in the market, the problems faced by them and the solutions they are looking for, as well as the technology and market trends," he said. "Input from the potential users will certainly contribute to the refinement of the scope and direction of research, increasing the chance of transferring the research output to the end users."

Moreover, many graduates who participated in the IAS have secured employment with the companies they had been attached to. This has enabled CityU to remain connected with industry through its graduates.

The University respects academic freedom and encourages faculty members to choose their own areas of research. "Our policy is to support good research within the scope of the roles of the University," said Professor Wong.

Motivation and recognition

"The 'applied' nature of the research doesn't really need to be exhibited through a tangible product," he said. "Applied research output can take various forms. It can be an enabling technology or prototype developed by staff in the Faculty of Science and Engineering to facilitate industry to develop high value-added products or a study of social issues that has policy implications for the Government by colleagues in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences or generates publications or a patent for an invention."

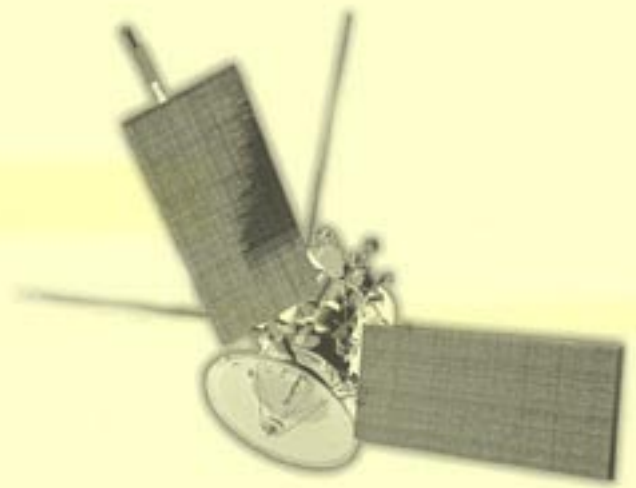
CityU already has in place an Applied Research Excellence Awards Scheme to give recognition to staff members who excel in applied research. The fifth round will take place early next year. "I hope to encourage the University to give more recognition to staff for their achievements in applied research," said Professor Wong.

With the support of the Working Group on Applied R&D, he will continue to map out the broad direction of applied research and formulate related policies and guidelines in consultation with the deans of faculties/schools.

Several initiatives are in the pipeline. Among them is the establishment of Applied Research Centres focusing on selected areas. “The purpose is to assemble pools of talent, people with good track records in their respective fields who are able to attract industrial sponsorship,” said Professor Wong. He also plans to introduce an Applied Research Grant to support projects leading to ITF applications. The grant will be similar to the Strategic Research Grant, which is intended to lead to CERG applications. “The projects to be funded by the Applied Research Grant must have sponsors from industry and must also apply for ITF next year,” Professor Wong said. “In addition to monetary support, the connections with and endorsement from industry are significant. That’s why we place great emphasis on the requirement for sponsorship from industry.”

Professor Wong is also considering the provision of top-up funds for external applied research grants awarded by the Government and subvented organizations, for example, ITF, SME Development Fund and the Professional Services Development Assistance Fund. This would encourage staff members to apply for industrial/professional sabbatical leave to work with public and private-sector organizations on real-life problems. “The insights gained from the sabbatical may lead to more applied work and ITF applications, as well as enrichment of classroom teaching,” Professor Wong said. He also hopes to encourage departments to have an appropriate mix of personnel by recruiting staff members with industrial/professional experience.

To promote applied research, a well-thought-out mechanism for evaluation of faculty members’ research performance is equally important as an adequate infrastructure conducive to research. Professor Wong is considering recommending that faculties/schools and departments accord substantial weight to staff members’ applied research performance in personnel decisions (promotion, contract renewal and substantiation of appointment). “Generally speaking, the true measurement of the performance of an applied research project is the degree of



impact it creates on society,” Professor Wong said. “But we could also consider other criteria, such as the impact on business, industry, the profession and community; patents filed/granted; ITF grants received; contract research and consultancy for external organizations; technology licensing deals under negotiation/closed, start-up companies formed, and contribution to publications.” The criteria are not exhaustive and would be subject to fine-tuning after consultation with the faculties/schools.

Once the broad parameters of applied research have been finalized, an open forum will be held in September to brief staff members on the University’s aspirations for enhancing applied research and the mechanisms for evaluating performance in that regard.

Promoting graduate studies to facilitate applied research

Professor Wong also believes that strengthening the recruitment of graduate students will help promote applied research. “Academics need graduate students, not only to help them, but also to bounce back ideas. Research students can give valuable fresh input, follow up with ideas that academics may not have time to, and boost the reputation of their supervisors and the institution,” he said. One of the ways to boost graduate studies was through collaborative arrangements. The establishment of the Joint Advanced Research Centre in Suzhou, between CityU and the University of Science and Technology of China, for example, allows academics from both institutions to work together on areas of common interest, while supervising students.

“We’ve got a solid foundation: application-oriented subject disciplines, good track record of success for applied research, close links and collaboration with industries as well as higher education institutions on the mainland,” said Professor Wong. “What we need now is more encouragement, support and promotion to facilitate further advancement along the direction we’re heading.” He hopes that with the support of faculties and schools, CityU will soon devise a new set of policies and schemes that will strengthen applied research and postgraduate studies and lead to greater cooperation between academia and industry. ■

Mainland undergraduate recruitment enters exciting new phase

■ By Shuyee Chen

The sticky hot month of June is college entrance examination time across the mainland. The National Joint College Entrance Examination was held on 7, 8 and 9 June this year. The results are expected to be announced around 28 June. In the period from early to mid-July, every college and university will select students for admission, and CityU's student recruitment work on the mainland will come to an end for this year.

"I am very confident that CityU will do well in recruiting mainland students this year," says **Dr Jimmy Fang** of the Department of Economics and Finance, who went to Beijing in April to help recruit students to the Faculty of Business. "I believe we can recruit even better students than in the past."

Gain official and public recognition

This is the third year that CityU has recruited self-financed students from the mainland. In 2003 and 2004, the University did its own student recruitment on the mainland. At that time, the National Joint College Entrance Examination System was not open to Hong Kong's universities. Earlier this year, the Ministry of Education agreed to include Hong Kong's eight UGC-funded universities on the list of key state universities if they wished to be included. CityU decided to take advantage of this opportunity and joined the National Joint College Entrance Examination System. The decision allows CityU to recruit outstanding secondary school graduates in 17 provinces and cities through the same procedures and methods used by the key state universities of the mainland.



Dr Zhu Guobin

"Having joined the System, CityU is listed among the top Chinese universities, along with the likes of Peking University and Tsinghua University," says **Dr Zhu Guobin**, Director of the External Liaison and Cooperation Office (ELCO). "Not only will it help CityU establish its image as one of the leading universities in China, but it will also help us recruit

quality secondary school graduates from all over the country." So far, only CityU and the Chinese University of Hong Kong have chosen to join the System, gaining official and public recognition as key state universities.

In a bid to promote greater internationalization of local universities and make Hong Kong an educational hub of



CityU's mainland recruitment campaigns help promote the University's image on the mainland.

the region, the UGC has raised the quota of non-local first year undergraduate students from 4% to 8% this year. This means CityU will be able to recruit about 180 non-local students, including 150 from the mainland. Dr Fang says: "The experience of the leading universities in the West shows that it's imperative to broaden the sources of our students if we are to have quality students. Take Harvard University, MIT and the University of California (Berkeley) for example, their student populations are very international, with students coming from all over the world. Also, Peking University's students aren't from Beijing alone but from every corner of the country."

A good university must have good students

From 1999 to 2002, CityU recruited mainland students through scholarship schemes offered by the Hong Kong Jockey Club and the Hong Kong Government. Only students already enrolled in Fudan University and Shanghai Jiaotong University could be recruited. This assured the quality of the students. Now CityU will only recruit students who have qualified for the key state universities in the entrance examination. Dr Zhu says: "A good university must have good students. So our recruitment is targeted at the cream of the mainland secondary school graduates. Quantity is only secondary."

Early this year, ELCO was assigned by the Management to play a leading role in the University's mainland recruitment activities. Apart from making and implementing promotion plans and strategies, it invites the faculties, departments and the Admissions Office to participate in the mainland recruitment campaigns. This



Dr Jimmy Fang

year the mainland student recruitment team held road shows and recruitment talks to promote CityU in such cities as Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Zhengzhou, Nanjing and Hangzhou.

The team's activities were widely reported by the mainland media including CCTV, Radio Beijing and the Shenzhen Television Station, reaching tens of thousands of mainland students and parents.

Dr Zhu says: "By joining the National Joint College Entrance Examination System, CityU has not only established itself as a key state university, it has also gained a lot of opportunities to promote itself. Within only a few months, CityU has become widely known and this is certainly very advantageous to the University's long-term development on the mainland in the future."



Dr Louisa Wei

Representatives from all of the faculties and the Admissions Office participated in promotion activities during the past few months of the intensive campaign.

Dr Louisa Wei was one of the representatives from the School of Creative Media. She says: "Although our teachers and courses are very good, as we are relatively young, we aren't terribly well known on the

mainland. By means of such campaigns, we can have opportunities to introduce our university and our courses directly to mainland students and parents so they can have more concrete ideas about CityU and know that some of our courses are even better than similar ones offered by mainland universities."

Create CityU's own brand name

In addition to Dr Wei and Dr Fang, representatives on the mainland recruitment team included: Dr Stephen Liao and Dr Robert Davison from the Faculty of Business; Dr Arthur Cheung and Dr Pan Haihua from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; Professor Johnny Chan and Dr Richard Yuen from the Faculty of Science and Engineering; Professor Liu Zhi-Qiang from the School of



Creative Media; Dr Lin Feng from the School of Law; and Dr Emily Cheng and Ms Helen Lam from the Admissions Office.

Before CityU joined the National Joint College Entrance Examination System, mainland students could apply to CityU as well as to mainland universities. This extra choice is no longer available because CityU is now listed among the key mainland universities. "It's the question of you can't have your cake and eat it too," says Dr Zhu. "At this stage when a growing number of mainland students wish to come to Hong Kong for further studies, we believe CityU joining the central Government's joint student recruitment scheme to gain the state's official recognition will help us enormously to build our reputation and networks on the mainland. It will have a very positive long-term influence on CityU's future."

To this, CityU President Professor H K Chang pointed out that, as a university with only 20 years of history, it is essential for CityU to create its own brand. "A university's name is often the first thing that comes to an employer's mind when recruiting staff. If CityU can enhance its image, all our graduates will benefit and enjoy better career prospects. On the other hand, if our image suffers, it will hurt us. That's why our student recruitment on the mainland should emphasize quality rather than quantity. That's also why we should position ourselves according to the 2004 *Times Higher Education Supplement's* ranking of CityU as one of the top ten universities in the Greater China area," the President says. ■

Proactively engaged in enhancing the quality of education

■ By Annie Sing

Around 50 members of staff from CityU have volunteered to share up-to-date subject information and a variety of pedagogical innovations with teachers and managerial level secondary school staff at the Teachers Update Course (TUC) in June and July.

Under the theme “Developing Reflective Professionals”, CityU volunteers will present 32 courses in five broad areas: supporting change; preparing students for lifelong learning; promoting innovation; updating subject knowledge; and enriching school culture. Dr Kwong Wai-man, Associate Professor of the Department of Applied Social Studies, is taking part in his third TUC. His lecture cum forum and workshop is entitled:

“Learning to teach through researching teaching. How can teachers develop their professionalism and contribute to school change?” He will be discussing the concept of teacher professionalism, helping TUC participants to review their teaching experience and enhance their professional development.

“The education reform currently undertaken by the Government is planned from a macro perspective, and it strongly emphasizes ‘hardware’ changes such as resource reallocation and change in curriculum,” Dr Kwong pointed out. “But if we go back to basics, we should be well aware that people are the core of education, and advancing teacher professionalism is the key to success of any reform effort.”

‘Researching teaching’, he said, refers to the teaching process through which teachers keep exploring, displaying and constructing individual and professional



About 50 academics participated in this year's Teachers Update Courses.

knowledge. “I hope teachers can take back these concepts to their schools. Through sharing with colleagues, they can cultivate the culture of ‘researching teaching’ throughout the community,” Dr Kwong said.

Since its inception in 1998, the TUC has expanded from a three-day course in 2002 to a 15-day course this year. Registration has steadily increased over the past few years and places offered have been quickly filled. So far, more than 9,000 teachers from hundreds of secondary schools have participated in the TUC, and more than two hundred CityU staff members have volunteered to take part.

“TUC acts as the interface to link up the University with secondary education,” Dr Kwong said. “By strengthening ties with the secondary school community, we aim at joint efforts to underpin education quality in Hong Kong.” ■

Twenty-one years promoting physical education —Mrs Dorothy Davies

■ By Annie Sing

Passionate about sports and dedicated to promoting physical education, Mrs Dorothy Davies, Associate Director of the Student Development Services (Physical Education), has displayed boundless energy managing the Physical Education (PE) Section of the Student Development Services (SDS) for more than two decades. Starting from scratch, she turned a small office lacking sporting facilities into a user-friendly Sports Complex offering various recreational and sports activities to students and staff.

Dorothy joined CityU in October 1984, when the then “City Polytechnic of Hong Kong” held its first admission exercise. She acted as Administrative Officer in the PE Section. As the only staff in the Section, she was responsible for planning and implementing everything from hiring appropriate instructors to locating venues for students’ recreational and sports activities, all the while teaching aerobic dance and fitness classes herself.

“In those days, our so-called sporting facilities were two small table-tennis tables,” Dorothy recalls. “I had to search long and hard for suitable venues: private clubs, schools, public sports facilities. Anywhere that seemed reasonable and readily accessible was included on my list.

Rome was not built in one day

Despite the constraints, she enjoyed running the gamut of coordinating sports events and viewed the challenges with formidable optimism. “I’ve always liked organizing and managing things,” she says. “To me, lacking venues meant I had to be more resourceful and since I conducted a huge number of on-site visits, I gradually developed my knowledge in the design and planning of sporting venues.”

Dorothy was busily involved in the designing of the Sports Complex in the transitional period that CityU moved to the Kowloon Tong campus. Before the Complex officially opened in July 1990, her schedule became extremely hectic since she had to whisk between the PE Sections of the two campuses to organize PE courses. Despite huge burden of work, she derived the greatest job satisfaction from her involvement in developing the Sports Complex. “I learned a great deal of planning sporting facilities through the meetings and discussions with the architects and the Campus Planning Office (formerly part of the Estate and Development Office) and I enjoyed the process very much,” she beams.

Foster students’ life-long interest in sports

Dorothy’s ardour for sports started early in her life and her favorite sports activities

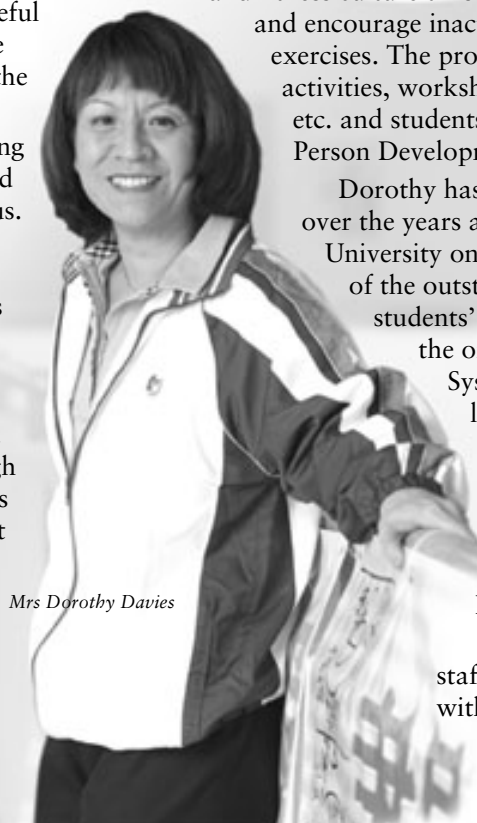
include swimming, athletics and hockey. She maintains that one must have a healthy body before one can have a healthy mind. Having embarked upon a major thrust to bolster CityU’s whole person development philosophy, she continuously and proactively promotes physical education and sports by organizing a variety of regular PE courses such as badminton, basketball, tennis, canoeing, fencing, tai chi, yoga, snorkel diving, social dance, physical fitness and so forth. Through the courses, she hopes that students can acquire the skills, enhance their well-being and develop a life-long interest in sports. The Section also came up with the idea of offering credit-bearing out-of-discipline PE courses—a strategy that stimulates a lot of interest among students. Both types of courses are in great demand and the “Physical Fitness” course has been the most popular one, with the attendance rate near 100%.

SDS’s PE Section also provides coaching service to CityU sports teams and arranges students with outstanding sports achievements to participate in sports competitions held locally and overseas. What can the students get from competitive sports besides health and fitness? Her answer: mental fortitude, team spirit, pride, a sense of fairness, positive thinking and problem-solving. The essence of competitive sports, as Dorothy believes, is sportsmanship and be the best that one can be.

The well-received “Wellness March” programme has been launched since 1997 and is one of the life-long education programmes held each year to promote a health and fitness culture throughout the university community and encourage inactive people to take part in sports exercises. The programme comprises physical activities, workshops, outdoor pursuits and talks, etc. and students can earn points in the Whole Person Development Award Scheme.

Dorothy has acquired many fond memories over the years and is profoundly attached to the University on a number of levels. She is proud of the outstanding achievements of CityU students’ sports teams. She is also proud of the online “Sports Facilities Booking System”, a first of its kind among local universities. “I always put CityU first and devote myself to it by investing my time and effort here,” she says. “I appreciate CityU’s caring culture and do my best to support the 1% Fundraising Project.”

As one of the longest serving staff, Dorothy Davies has bonded with CityU. ■



Mrs Dorothy Davies