The New Year promises to be an exciting one for City University of Hong Kong, with several new developments and landmarks expected. Among the more significant changes is the appointment of Professor Way Kuo as CityU’s new President, who will assume the role soon. In terms of course content, students will be able to choose their first General Education courses this semester from the six offerings in conjunction with the out-of-class lectures.

While these and other major events will help shape the University, Linkage took the opportunity this month to get a little more personal. With 2008 underway and the Propitious Year of the Rat ahead, we sought some insight into just what the University staff envisage and hope for in the year ahead.

The Year of the Rat, which is the first in the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac, begins on February 7, 2008, and ends January 25, 2009. Despite their rather suspect contemporary image, the rat of the zodiac is regarded as a symbol of good luck and 2008 is said to be a year of plenty, bringing opportunity and good prospects.

This positive sentiment was shared by CityU staff, who expressed their hopes for the New Year and revealed the resolutions they had made to bring these hopes to fruition.

Professor Alex Kwan Yui-huen, head of Department of Applied Social Studies, took a more work-focused look at the year ahead. “My New Year resolution is to successfully secure the two new UGC funding undergraduate programmes, which will be my best gift to the staff of the Department of Applied Social Studies,” he said.

Ms Geraldine Mak Ping-ting, Administrative Officer, Vice-President (Undergraduate Education), saw the year ahead as a chance to turn challenges into opportunities. “This is a special year that sheds light on the meaning of life and turns difficulties into blessings,” she said. “Starting from the Year of the Rat, I wish to live simply for the purpose of reaping the fruit of the Spirit: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, as the Bible says. This wish can be translated into various good actions within my family and work lives. I would like to pass this message to all those I know as the gift of the New Year.”

Ms Winnie Leung Wing-yee, Head of Internal Audit Office, said “I wish everyone could live and work happily and enjoy the benefits of our alma mater’s sports facilities.”

Ms Hovey Chui Kit-chun, Audit Officer of the Internal Audit Office, said “I wish to make the most of 2008. “Stay young and healthy. Have more love and more energy,” she said.

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Student Development Services counsellor, Ms Winnie Leung Wing-yee, had a simple plan to make the most of 2008. “Stay young and healthy. Have more love and more energy,” she said.

Similarly, Ms Hovey Chui Kit-chun, Audit Officer of the Internal Audit Office, said “I wish everyone could live and work happily and enjoy the benefits of our alma mater’s sports facilities.”

2008 promised to be an active year for Ms Pheony Tsang Yee-ping, Alumni Relations Officer with the Development and Alumni Relations Office. “As one of CityU’s alumni, I wish to take more time doing physical exercise and enjoying the benefits of my alma mater’s sports facilities,” she said.

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Utilising resources to benefit the community

Mr Sun also contributes his professional knowledge for the betterment of society. As one of the founding members of the Hong Kong Institute of Facility Management, he has helped promote the education, training, research and professional development of facilities management. He has also served as a voluntary professional advisor for the government to help owners’ corporations and local citizens solve problems in building management.

In addition, Mr Sun actively participates in social services by using his expertise in organizing large events, Sowers Action is a charity that raises funds for mainland school children. Mr Sun volunteered to fill the role of organizing committee chairman in 2001 and achieved outstanding results. Compared with the previous year, the number of participants in the annual fundraiser jumped from 1,400 to 1,800 and donations increased by about 60% to more than HK$2.4 million.

"Investment in education is the most effective way to use resources,” Mr Sun said. “Knowledge can be passed on to transform the burden of a large population into an educated resource that can improve living standards in mainland China."

He attributed the success of the fundraiser to the effective use of resources, motivation of volunteers, adequate support, encouragement awards for participants and a high level of transparency in the use of donations.

Mr Sun also serves with the Hong Kong Buddhist Cultural Association as the organizing committee chairman for the event “Full Moon Walk”, to be held during this year’s Mid-Autumn Festival to raise funds for the schooling of mainland orphans.

"Participating in voluntary work enhances my learning experience. Seeing the unselﬁsh work of other voluntary workers reinforces my belief that every one of us should make a contribution towards making this a better society.”

By Vivien Lee

By Michelle Leung
妙曲歌韻舒身心
Seeking solace through singing

代人的日常生活十分繁忙，時有難免令人感到疲乏。除了適量運動外，原來唱歌亦可以健強身心、減輕工作壓力。正因如此，部份有共同志趣的城大教職員2003年成立了教職員歌唱團，多年來，歌唱團的成員數時有增減，但參與的同事對這項有益身心的活動興趣不減。樂此不疲。

教職員歌唱團不時會舉辦表演，例如在午膳時段舉辦，或每個月會聚在一次練習一次。除了表演曲目外，雙月會進行聲樂訓練。歌唱團去年參加了在韓國釜山舉行的音樂節，為了應付這個比賽，成員更加倍練習，務求在比賽中獲得理想效果。

資訊系統服务业署署長侯錦蘭女士和她的科學工程學院同事組成歌唱團的兩名主要成員，她們都表示，參加歌唱團有減壓的效果。

侯錦蘭女士說：「我喜歡唱歌，參加歌唱團後，有機會與志同道合的同事一起唱歌，同時又可放鬆精神，十分有益身心。」

何明莊小姐表示，她是大學畢業生，學生時代已參加合唱團，後來因為工作忙碌而減少了一段時間。當她知道大學有教職員歌唱團後，便重新加入。由於歌唱團為教職員提供了一個可以放鬆心情的平台，她們都表示非常喜歡。

何明莊小姐表示，合唱團目前的運作已較為成熟，又有機會到海外參加音樂節，更可藉此機會提升歌唱技巧，將來希望日後能與更多歌唱團交流。

Event: Performing Arts

Stress is, all too often, an unavoidable product of our busy professional lives. In seeking ways to relax and improve our state of mind, we often turn to exercise. But as someone who knows the joys of singing in the shower or humming along to an MP3 player, I gather singing is also a very great way to relax and ease the tensions of a hectic or stressful day. Partly for this reason, numerous CityU staff established the Staff Association Singing Group in 2003. Since its inception, the number of participants has varied but a core of enthusiastic members has sung along throughout the group's full history.

The Singing Group often receives invitations to perform, for example, singing during a buffettime gathering. To prepare for performances, they meet and practice once or twice a month. Last year, the group participated in the Busan Choral Festival and Competition held in South Korea. In preparing for that competition, they practised intensively before leaving Hong Kong.

Mrs Yu Chan Wan-kam, Acting Director of the Enterprise Solutions Office, and Miss Fanny Ho Ming-chong, Executive Officer II of the Faculty of Science and Engineering, are core members of the Singing Group. They both feel that joining the group has helped reduce stress.

"I like singing," said Mrs Yu. "After joining the Singing Group, I had the opportunity to sing together with colleagues that share the same passion for singing. It relaxes me. It really is a wonderful activity for the well-being of physical and mental health."

As a student at CityU, Miss Ho was already a member of the University Choir. However, due to her busy work schedule, she later quit. When she found out about the Staff Association Singing Group, she thought of reviving her choral interest again. "As a member of the singing group, I often need to spend time on practice," she said, "Fortunately, we usually hold our practice sessions on campus, which makes it easier to squeeze in some time away from work."

Both Mrs Yu and Miss Ho went with the Singing Group to the Busan Choral Festival and described it as an unforgettable experience. During the trip, they had the opportunity to improve friendships with other members. They had close contact with students and gained a better understanding of their way of thinking.

Miss Ho said the Singing Group was now well established and organized. Participating in an international music festival was both personally and technically enriching, bolstering friendships and improving their singing techniques. She said she hoped to take part in similar experiences with other choirs in the future.

By Ellen Chan

Honours

Exhibition

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Counsellors help students remove stress

With rising awareness of emotional problems, students will seek help for a more variety of reasons as well.

“In previous years we would mostly see students dealing with relationship problems or sexual issues but now we are seeing more cases relating to mental health issues,” said Ms Cheung. “There was more diagnostic by medical practitioners as a result of greater awareness of mental health issues in the wider community and the University has much closer ties with the medical community and will receive formal referrals from doctors who identify such symptoms in students,” she said.

The shift was also a result of the more intense competition for university places and graduate job vacancies, Ms Cheung added.

Workshops and seminars held by SDS for staff and students have raised awareness on campus of the University’s counselling services.

“A measure of our success is that an increasing percentage of students coming to see us are doing so as a result of word-of-mouth recommendations from their peers,” said Senior Counsellor, Ms Holly Wong Kit-ing.

“It is becoming more important also for help to identify the students who might be experiencing difficulties emotionally and mentally. The sheer increase in the number of students at the University means it can become more difficult to identify those at risk,” said Ms Wong. “In Australia, for example, the ratio of counsellors to students is likely to be about 1 in 3,000 whereas in Hong Kong it is closer to 1 in 8,000, so we need to be vigilant.”

SDS will hold the Mental Health Week from 3 to 8 March.

By Craig Francis