Focus

Teaching from the heart

By Irene Lau

What does it take to be a good teacher? Enthusiasm and persistence? Unique and effective teaching methods? Care for the students? Teaching from the heart? Vision with patience? Seeing students' achievements as one's own?

Far from making an exhaustive list, all these are attributes shared by the three winners of this year’s Teaching Excellence Awards. They are Dr Cheung Sai-on, Associate Professor from Department of Building and Construction, Dr Raymond Lau Yiu-keung, Assistant Professor from Department of Information Systems, and Ms Maria Jose Pareja Lopez, Lecturer from Division of Language Studies.

Having taught at CityU for 20 years, Dr Cheung is now the programme leader of BSc (Hons) Surveying, lecturing on building contracts and law-related modules. He keeps a close touch with students, even with the former ones back from the 1990s, who have become top executives in their corporations or teachers in foreign universities. To strengthen the ties, Dr Cheung has been holding annual gatherings

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such as BBQ parties for ten consecutive years, creating a pleasant link between former and current students, both undergraduate and postgraduate.

Quoting the late Mother Teresa, Dr Cheung describes his achievement with modesty: “In this life we cannot do great things,” he said. “We can only do small things with great love.”

“The job of a teacher is not just giving off knowledge in textbooks, but also to share our experience and insights gained in the industry over the years,” he said. “My mission is to pass on my expertise to surveyors of the next generation.” Dr Cheung believes there can’t be a single formula that fits all students, so he has designed various teaching materials and initiated several new learning modes, including online instruction, overseas exchange trips and internship stints to help students to learn better and keep updated on the latest advances in the industry.

Another winner, Dr Raymond Lau, has taught e-commerce management, website design and information system management at CityU since 2004. He shares Dr Cheung’s view that students need stimulating through various learning methods, both inside and outside classrooms, in order to understand their own strengths and, from there, to begin their lifelong learning.

He encourages students to discuss among themselves and urges them to work out their own answers to problems raised, so as to train independent thinking. Sometimes he finds surprising answers from his students, learning lessons from the other end of education.

His practice-focused approach to teaching and learning helps students to nurture their talents. Once a student of Dr Lau’s was involved in setting up an e-commerce company, and this assignment got rid of her absent-mindedness. She discovered her own potential and eventually became a successful entrepreneur in e-commerce.

Of the three TEA winners, Maria is the youngest in terms of teaching years at CityU. She’s only been here since 2007, though she had earlier gained rich and wide experience in teaching Spanish across the world. Yet the youngest winner is not the least influential because, thanks to her devoted work, the number of students in the Spanish stream in the language programme has more than trebled within a brief two years’ time.

Instead of teaching the language alone, Maria is leading her students into the great wealth of Spanish and Latin culture. Besides grammar and vocabulary, she has brought to her students Latin music, TV and entertainment programmes, flamenco dancing, and Spanish cuisine through various events and outings along with class activities and games. In this ever-changing era of inevitable internationalisation, Maria aims to bring up responsive, globalised individuals with a world vision, not just graduates who simply know the Spanish language.

Maria’s motto is “Teaching makes a difference” — her passion in teaching lightens up lives of her students, and she is loved by both her current and former students, who return her loving heart in teaching with theirs. She has her students totally engaged in the learning process. From declaring their purpose of studying this relatively rare language in Hong Kong during the pre-entry interviews, adopting a Spanish name in the first class, actually conversing in Spanish with fellow students and friends in and out of class, to attending summer classes in Salamanca, her students truly feel themselves turned into Spaniards. “For me, it is very important when students start making jokes and showing their sense of humour in Spanish, because that’s the surest sign they are acquiring the communicative competence in the language,” she added.
Canteen survey helps improve meal quality for the University community

By Shirley Pang

People regard food as their prime want. Food and services provided by CityU’s student canteen or City Express, a great concern for many people, are closely related with the quality of life for the university community. Therefore, it is important to ensure the quality of food and services.

With this view in mind, Ms Teresa Ng Kit-ye, Assistant Professor of the Department of Management Sciences, decided to include “CityU’s student canteen” as one of the assignment topics for her “Sampling Survey” course this year. By conducting an opinion survey, two classes of her Year-3 Management Sciences students were able to help the Shing Hin Catering Group, City Express’s caterer, by soliciting opinions and expectations from faculty, staff and students so that improvements could be made accordingly.

Unlike previous assignment topics that focused on corporations, this survey covered a subject that concerned most of the university members. Under Ms Ng’s guidance, students formed themselves in small groups, interviewed around 600 staff and fellow students. They completed the whole project on their own, right from the design of questionnaire, on-the-spot interviews, data processing and analysis to the compilation of the report. Finally, they made suggestions to the Shing Hin Catering Group, based on the findings of the survey.

They were delighted to see improvement in food and services at the canteen. Chan Sun-ming, one of the Year-3 Management Sciences students responsible for coordination of the project, said, “As a group leader, I encountered various difficult issues such as data input and analytical errors. I would immediately consult Ms Ng in such cases, who gave me detailed advice with extreme patience. Ms Ng is very serious about this project, so we dare not be negligent!”

This survey was only one of the many research projects coordinated by Ms Ng, who is full of passion about teaching even after working at CityU for over 25 years.

With a candid personality and a sense of humour, Ms Ng is a fast talker, very friendly with young people. Her hobbies reveal her all-roundedness. She likes playing tennis and practicing yoga, and has recently become a fan of Taichi. Besides sports, she is also an ardent amateur in Chinese painting and calligraphy.

“Canteen food and services are an issue that many CityU members care about since they are closely linked to the lives and health of our students during their three years study on campus. Also, it has significant implications for the staff’s welfare,” said Ms Ng.

This enthusiasm motivated Ms Ng to organise the students to undertake the survey. “Students enjoyed a great sense of satisfaction when they saw the improvements in canteen food and services after the survey,” she said.
Management workshops strengthen quality assurance

By Michelle Leung & Eliza Lee

To promote best practices and strengthen quality assurance in the University, the Human Resources Office organised two Management Workshops on 15 and 19 April for senior staff. Speakers from within and outside the University were invited to share their valuable experience on topics such as performance management, university governance, financial management and implementation of the Strategic Plan.

In his opening remarks, Professor Way Kuo, University President, said, “Every decision you make as a manager should be in the best interest of the organisation. You’ll lead the community and effectively use the resources given by the government. The workshops provide a good opportunity for two-way communication and for learning from one another.”

Human resources are the most valuable assets of the University. Council member Mr Yeung Ka-sing, a senior human resources expert with more than 30 years of experience, shared some tips on performance management at the first workshop. He emphasised that communications count a lot. “Performance management is about expectations and communications. Supervisors and managers should make clear their expectations and make sure colleagues’ work reflects their best potential,” he said.

Mr Yeung also believed that supervisors and managers do not have to actually “manage” performance when they work with colleagues as a team. He also reminded the participants the importance of their role as mentors; and how they should always be there to render assistance and provide guidance for achieving superior performance since performance management is for the future, after all.

The meaning of governance has evolved in the last 20 years. Professor Chan Chi-hou, Acting Provost, and Professor Julia Tao Lai Po-wah, Chief-of-Staff, shared their views with colleagues on the modern concept of governance, and the roles and responsibilities of Heads and Deans in promoting and ensuring good governance. Professor Tao said, “An effective manager can make university governance more participative, transparent, efficient, decentralised, engaging and accountable.” Professor Chan and Professor Tao agreed good communication is the building block for trust and mutual cooperation.

Professor Martin Painter, University Coordinator for implementation of the S-Year Plan, spoke to colleagues on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2010-2015. “Each unit will draw up an action plan based on the discussions on their expected key contributions in realising the University’s goals and strategies over the next five years,” Professor Painter said. In preparing the plan, he suggested each department should review its current performance and activities, and propose initiatives and improvements with set time-lines. Professor Painter also suggested that benchmarking against another organisation is an effective way to define targets and set performance indicators.

1. Director of Human Resources Ms Helen Leung (left) presents a souvenir to Mr Yeung Ka-sing.
2. Professor Martin Painter
3. Professor Chan Chi-hou (left) and Professor Julia Tao Lai Po-wah
Vault of knowledge

By Ellen Chan

Keeping pace with the University’s growth, the Run Run Shaw Library has been diversifying its services. Besides the conventional books and journals loan service, it is striving to improve its physical environment to create an atmosphere conducive to learning. With this objective in mind, it has expanded its space to enable CityU staff and students to enjoy its various facilities more conveniently. At the same time, it has taken initiatives to interact with users to understand and meet their diverse needs and help them achieve effective learning and research objectives. Today, when one visits the Run Run Shaw Library, one finds it has a refreshing outlook.

As the Library’s collection continues to grow, the Library’s usable area is shrinking. Professor Steve Ching Hsiang-huo, the University Librarian, decided to renovate the warehouse at Shatin to convert it into a branch library last year. The Shatin branch library went into operations in August 2009. It provides various learning resources and services to staff and students.

The Shatin warehouse was set up in 2002 to improve the Library’s space management. It stores valuable but less popular items such as some monographs, bound serials and periodicals, and audio and audio-visual materials like DVDs and video tapes. Staff and students can still access the materials through the library’s reservation service.

The Shatin branch library now has over 343,000 monographs, about 113,000 volumes of bound serials and periodicals, over 22,700 audio and audio-visual items, and over 800 art works. The rare editions and the treasured collection of historical titles are stored in a special room with controlled temperature and humidity.

Different in operational mode from the main library at Kowloon Tong campus, the Shatin branch library has a closed-stack design. CityU Staff and students with valid library cards may borrow reference materials by completing and submitting a form to the library staff. The closed-stack design not only enhances security but also makes it convenient for readers to access the materials. “The classification and storage system of our collection was designed at the time when the materials were moved to Shatin. To make it easier for users to quickly locate the desired materials, it’s better to use the current operations mode,” said Ms Peggy Fung Siu-nga, Assistant Librarian I. Besides, there are some special rooms and study areas where staff and students can use the Library’s resources there.

Peggy says a shuttle van runs between the main library and the branch library for transportation of reference materials, from Monday to Friday. CityU staff and students can contact library staff in advance to borrow reference materials from the Shatin branch library. An online reservation service is available and the requested materials can be delivered at Kowloon Tong campus on the next working day.

1. The new face of the main library
2. Some of the law books collections are stored in a special room with controlled temperature and humidity.
3. Some of the monographs, bound serials and periodicals, and audio and audio-visual materials like DVDs and video tapes are stored here.
4. Some special rooms and study areas are reserved for staff and students.
Returned leader intends to make a difference

By Scarlett Leung

In pursuit of his ideals, and to uphold his belief that our future lies in Asia in general and China in particular, Dr David Cheng Xing joined CityU as Associate Vice-President (Mainland and External Affairs) in April 2010.

“It was in my plans that I return to Asia for new opportunities. Hong Kong is a dynamic city with proximity to the Mainland. It is a natural choice for me to take up this current position,” said Dr Cheng.

“I have been in the US for 25 years, working in research and administration in the higher education sector. There is certainly something to learn from the American system, which is mature and well developed. However, with the opportunities to work with people from different parts of the world available at CityU, a young and dynamic institution, I believe we can make a difference,” said Dr Cheng.

Dr Cheng echoes the University management’s globalisation vision when he reiterates the importance of equipping the University’s graduates with multi-cultural competencies, globally applicable skills and global vision, which would enable them to get jobs in every part of the world. This mission will be on the top of his agenda in the immediate term.

Dr Cheng has extensive experience in dealing with the Mainland and with overseas institutions on joint teaching programmes and research activities. Before joining the University, he was the Executive Director of the Office of the Provost and Assistant Dean for Research and Planning at Columbia University. Prior to that, Dr Cheng was the Director of Institutional Research at City University of New York, and before that, Associate Director of Planning and Institutional Research at University of California, Santa Barbara.
“They said it”
“傳人傳語”

“Work hard, and luck will then follow you.”

Mr Anthony Wu Ting-yuk, Chairman of the Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre, said at the annual High Table Dinner of the Alumni Civility Hall.

「努力工作，好運就會隨之而來。」

曾是研究中心主席胡定邦先生出席校友樂活堂周年高桌晚宴時說。

“Every great city deserves a great city university.”

A university slogan proposed by Chris Leung Ka-kit, Year 3 student of the Department of Economics and Finance and Grand Prize winner of the “Tribute to our past, Commitment to our future” Ideas Contest.

「每個偉大的城市都應有一所偉大的城市大學。」

榮獲「昔日與未來」問答及創意比賽大獎的經濟及金融系三年級生梁嘉傑為大學創作的標語。

“I always thought that my being a slow writer meant I was not talented. But I came to realise that I am good at something I am also very slow at.”

Pulitzer Prize winning author Mr Junot Díaz told the audience at the City University Pulitzer Prize Distinguished Lecture.

「我常常以為自己寫作那麼慢是因為沒有天份，但我終於知道自己擅長寫作，卻寫得很慢。」

普立茲獎作家 Junot Díaz 先生主持香港城市大學普立茲獎傑出講座時告訴觀眾。

Linkage Quiz
靈機問答
Can you name the three Teaching Excellence Awards winners for this year?
你能列出今年三位傑出教學獎得主的姓名嗎？

Answer 答案:

Full Name 姓名（全名）:

Department 部門:

Tel 電話:

Write your answer and send a photocopy of this form to Linkage, c/o CPRO, by 10 June 2010. Each participant is allowed to submit one entry only. HK$50 gift vouchers will be awarded by lottery.
截至日期為6月10日，每人只限提交一份參加表，抽獎時只可獲頒價值HK$50的禮券，幸運兒由抽籤決定。

Lucky draw results for last Linkage quiz in issue 283:
《靈機》第283期問答得獎者*：

Yu Wai-hang (ARO)  Dung Yuk-man (BCH)
Ip Shue-lam (DIO)  Wu Fung-ying (OUC)
Ling Man-nung (MEEM)  Pang Mi-ching (RO)
Tam Wai-ying (SIDS)  Law Wing-yee (SGS)
Ho Po-ching (SLW)  Tse Lai-mi (VPISA)

* Winners should redeem the voucher on or before 20 June, late redemption will not be accepted.
* 購買者必須於6月20日前兌換禮券，逾期作廢。

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