Focus

Balancing the budget

By Karen Cheng

The Council recently endorsed the annual budget for the development of the University and the planned expenditure for each department and unit. To help colleagues understand more about the University’s financial plan, we invited Mr Simon Tang Siu-kee, Director of Finance, to share his views.

Mr Tang said the University’s fiscal policy is to achieve a balanced budget that ensures a healthy financial position. As a public institution, CityU has a responsibility to ensure public funds are spent wisely on worthwhile projects.

Over the past two years expenditure at CityU has surged and 10% more academic and administrative staff members have been hired to help prepare for the inception of the new four-year undergraduate curriculum. However, government funding remains unchanged at the moment because the number of students and teaching activities has not increased yet. Subsequently, departments and units at CityU have to try to make appropriate adjustments.

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“We have to prepare for rainy days and try to avoid unexpected financial problems,” Mr Tang said. “We now enjoy a very healthy financial position, but all departments and units must make long-term plans, control expenses and enhance the effective use of resources to guarantee sustainable development.”

Mr Tang suggested that all departments and units periodically conduct a review of their personnel structure in order to properly cope with their current workload and upcoming development. Departments and units whose workload has remained largely unchanged but have seen an increased headcount should consider whether it is necessary to fill vacancies created by regular staff turnover, so as to utilise resources more effectively.

When preparing a budget, departments and units should not simply refer to the one drawn up last year. Instead, they should embrace a long-term development plan with a forward-looking vision that considers how to add value by reducing costs and increasing revenue. They should also carefully review additional expenses and items for deletion.

Mr Tang stressed that reducing costs is not the only principle underpinning financial planning at CityU. The Finance Office is focusing more on the overall need of the University to maintain its sustainable future development. “Maintaining a sound financial position is paramount to the University,” he said. “Our budget should be aligned with the University’s long-term development to ensure resources are appropriately allocated.”

On the question of how expenditure should be allocated, Mr Tang suggested that department and unit heads ask themselves: “Would I spend the money this way if it were mine?” If properly planned, resources can be used most effectively, he added.

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“We should never give up on ourselves. If we do, we are doomed to fail. An optimistic attitude cannot guarantee success, but it will generate hope and opportunities. A pessimistic attitude will never lead to success.”

Dr Chan Yan-chong,
Associate Professor, Department of Management Sciences

“Positive Ageing is not about living longer, nor about how to avoid growing older. It’s about how to live life to the full.”

Chair Professor Ng Sik-hung,
Department of Applied Social Studies

“The idea behind ‘Aiming High’ is to have foresight as well as the ambition to create an international brand name. ‘Shooting Low’ means to proceed with your plan step by step, starting with some very simple actions such as a smile or a phone call. You cannot build up a brand name overnight and you always have to be fair.”

Professor Zhou Nan,
Department of Marketing

“Don’t let success go to your head and don’t let failure go to your heart.”

Chair Professor Ron Chen Guanrong,
Department of Electronic Engineering
Parents in Hong Kong work hard to boost their children’s English and Chinese language skills. But, as everyone knows, it’s a huge challenge.

Ms Karen Kim Won-kyung and Ms Julia Han Ji-yeon, Korean Instructors in the Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics, have a great deal of experience as language teachers and parents, and both are fluent in Cantonese, English and Korean. What is their secret to helping children master different languages?

“To learn, you must immerse yourself in a language environment and interact with the local community,” said Ms Kim, who joined CityU in 2002. Although her husband comes from Hong Kong, her son could not speak a word of Cantonese when he first started at a local kindergarten here at the age of three.

“At first, he found it hard to adjust, as he couldn’t understand anything his classmates were saying, and it was hard for him to play with them. However, after just six months, he could communicate with others in Cantonese,” Ms Kim said.

The secret? Cartoons. “He would watch a cartoon dubbed in Cantonese over and over again until he had mastered all the dialogue,” she said.

In addition to listening, interaction is also important if you want to learn another language. “His father speaks Cantonese with him; I use Korean and our domestic helper speaks English.” As a result, Ms Kim’s son, now 18 years old, speaks all three of these languages. In addition, he has learned Putonghua and can understand Japanese.

Ms Han added that teachers also have to try to keep themselves fully informed about popular culture and the latest trends in the country where the target language is spoken. “Today’s students are very different to those of ten years ago,” Ms Han said. “In the past, teachers used to provide most of the information about Korea, but now students sometimes know more than we do!”

So even though she lives in Hong Kong, she enjoys Korean television. “I used to watch Korean TV dramas purely for my own enjoyment, but now I see them as a useful resource for teaching materials,” she said.

To further inspire students and increase their levels of motivation, Ms Kim and Ms Han, the only full-time Korean instructors at CityU, introduce elements of tangible Korean culture into their classes. They have held sessions on how to make kimchi, the spicy pickled side dish that accompanies most Korean meals, and how to wear a hanbok, a traditional Korean dress.

Cartoons, movies, television, speaking and listening to the target language, food and culture—all of these factors help create an exciting environment in which students can explore other languages.

Without such an environment, studying vocabulary, memorising the rules of grammar and running through drills are reduced to academic exercises rather than significant language learning experiences, she suggested.

Tips on mastering a language

By Michelle Leung

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CityU bid farewell to a number of colleagues at a farewell party organised by the Human Resources Office on 18 June.

Professor Way Kuo, University President, expressed his thanks and deep admiration on behalf of the University community to the 12 long-serving retirees for their outstanding dedication to the University’s development.

The guest list included Professor Chan Chi-hou, Acting Provost; Professor Roderick Wong Sue-cheun, Vice President (Development and External Relations); Mr Gabriel Chan Sai-man, Chief Administration Officer; Professor Julia Tao Lai Po-wah, Chief-of-Staff; and Ms Helen Leung Lai-wa, Director of Human Resources.

At the reception, one of the colleagues planning to retire, Dr Ruth Yee Wing-yu, Associate Director of Student Development Services, talked about her experience working at CityU, an institution she joined in 1986. She said her work had become an essential part of her life and she thanked her colleagues, students and alumni for their years of support.

“Through my interactions with students over the years, I have come to realise that what I say and do can influence the lives of others, while the students have stimulated my own passion, persistence and hopes,” Dr Yee said.

She said she was amazed by CityU’s rapid development and was deeply moved by the enthusiastic team spirit exemplified by her colleagues’ energetic and innovative attitude to work.

Dr Yee is well prepared for retirement. After taking a good rest, she said she will enrich her learning by taking computer application courses and joining cultural activities and art training. She will also allocate more time to voluntary work in Sichuan and Guizhou, and, as an honorary advisor, she will share her experience working in student affairs with her CityU colleagues.

Dr John Ho Dit-sang, Associate Professor of the School of Law, said he had experienced many challenges and changes at the University in his 20 years of service. He said he had been struck by the way his colleagues and CityU students worked hard to surmount the difficulties faced by the institution during its development. He hoped his colleagues and the students can maintain this spirit of perseverance to meet future challenges.

Mr Kwok Kam-wing, Mr Lee Kin-kwok and Ms May Tse Lai-mee of the Campus Development and Facilities Office will also retire this year. All three said they hoped to have a good retirement and that they had fond memories of working at CityU for more than 20 years.

Other retirees this year include Professor John K Courtis, Visiting Professor of the Department of Accountancy; Professor Peter Tanner of the Department of Biology and Chemistry; Dr Cheung Tsang and Dr Kenneth Siu Guei-gu, Associate Professors in the Department of Physics and Materials Science; Dr Robin Bradbeer, Associate Professor of the Department of Electronic Engineering; Dr Lo Hing-po, Associate Professor of the Department of Management Sciences; and Mr Leung Ping-hung, Semi-skilled Labourer of the Department of Building and Construction.

The University’s senior management offers its best wishes to long-serving colleagues planning to retire.

Dr Ho (middle) with colleagues at the School of Law.

Dr Bradbeer (2nd from right) with colleagues.

Dr Yee (right) receives a souvenir from Professor Kuo.
Email is an integral part of our working lives. According to the Computing Services Centre at CityU, a total of 1,490,339 emails were sent and 2,226,405 received by CityU staff in May 2010. That’s an average of nearly 120,000 emails a day.

But even though electronic mail is convenient and fast, dangers lurk.

Dr Andy Chun Hon-wai, CityU’s Chief Information Officer, said if we are not careful when using computers and email, we may lay ourselves open to hacker attacks, putting our personal data at risk.

“We’ve come across a lot of phishing emails recently that claim to have been sent by the CityU email administrator. These kinds of emails use different excuses to ask colleagues to input their usernames and passwords. Colleagues should be alert as an authentic email will rarely request recipients to provide such personal data,” Dr Chun said.

To block spam emails and prevent hackers from accessing our files, we can set up filters and we should store sensitive personal data with great caution, he added. “People tend to carry around vast amounts of information on USB flash drives these days. This is very dangerous because these flash drives are small and easy to lose. It is very important that we keep all data files protected.”

This is Dr Chun’s advice:

- Don’t open any unknown emails and be alert to phishing emails and websites;
- Don’t provide personal data or passwords directly to any external emails or webpages;
- Don’t send unencrypted personal data files via email;
- USB drives or files that contain personal data must be encrypted, stored carefully and not carried around on a regular basis;
- Delete files in USB drives once they are not in use; and
- You should scan any software or application before using it.

How to set up the email filter function

- Click “Email” under “My CityU” on CityU’s homepage
- Click “Account Management” in http://email.cityu.edu.hk/home/
- Select “Set up Junk Mail Filters” in http://email.cityu.edu.hk/home/acc_set_stf.htm

Or visit: http://www.cityu.edu.hk/csc/deptweb/support/faq/email/spamfilter/enablefilter.htm

For enquiries, please contact the help desk in the Computing Services Centre (Tel: 3442 7658).
CityU Press, a veteran of the annual Hong Kong Book Fair, will launch a series of new titles and offer special discounts on its publications at this year’s event. The publishing arm of the University will also be manning its largest ever booth space—six stalls in total.

This is good news: a huge number of visitors are expected this year, after a record 900,000 attended in 2009. There will be more than 20 countries promoting books in a total of 14 themed areas this year, with CityU Press occupying space in “University’s Square”, which is devoted to academic texts.

The Fair, which is organised by Hong Kong Trade Development Council, will take place at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) from 21 to 27 July. The programme will include cultural talks and seminars to help promote a better reading culture in the local community.

One of the trends under discussion at the Fair, a major event for the publishing industry in Asia, will be the development of digital publishing and the way social networking platforms have boomed in recent years. Prominent local and overseas publishers will be invited to discuss this trend at the Asian Publishing Conference scheduled for later this year.

Mr Patrick Kwong Tze-hea, Director of CityU Press, said CityU is already heavily involved in publishing e-books, explaining that its first batch is planned for release this year. News about CityU’s e-books will be posted on the Internet, Mr Kwong said.

CityU Press has also published four new titles to coincide with this year’s theme: “Reading the World, Writing the Future”. The four titles are part of the Understanding Asia series, and cover Bangladesh, Iraq, Japan and Singapore. The aim of the series is to encourage people in Hong Kong, particularly tertiary students, to be more aware of the history and culture of neighbouring Asian countries, broaden their horizons and increase cultural exchanges.

The Press will also launch two new titles in the Caring for Youth series. One is Hikikomori and the Internet—Empowerment and Disempowerment and the other is Youth and Consumption. Professor Lo Tit-wing of the Department of Applied Social Studies and Chief Editor of the series, said the two books offer social workers, teachers, parents and others insight into how to deal with young people today and the problems they encounter growing up.

Another related title is Faith and Beliefs on Social Work Practice, compiled by Dr Kam Ping-kwong, Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Social Studies. It is a collection of writings detailing the challenges, frustration, success and knowledge gleaned in the workplace by a group of social work graduates.

Another new title is Conversation Guide—Japanese, Cantonese, Mandarin, co-authored by Mr David Santandreu Calonge, Associate Director of the Office of Education Development and General Education, and Mr Hitoshi Murakami, Senior Lecturer from the Division of Language Studies at the Community College of CityU.

“University’s Square” is located in the centre of Hall 1 in HKCEC, and the reference for the CityU Press location is 1D-A28.
每年一度的「香港書展」是亞洲地區出版界的盛事，主辦單位香港貿易發展局為此每年都會設定一個主題，安排相關的文化講座或座談會，以助培育本地的閱讀風氣。

今年書展的主題是「關心社會，關愛地球」。因應這一主題，城大推出「認識亞洲系列」叢書中的四部新書，即《孟加拉——金色土地》、《伊拉克——伊甸園的故鄉》、《新加坡——小國繁榮之道》、《日本——太陽島的神話》，期望藉此鼓勵市民，尤其是大專學生，多認識並關注亞洲鄰國的歷史文化，開拓視野，增進文化交流。

書展將於7月21日至27日假灣仔香港會議展覧中心舉行，參展書商來自20多個國家或地區，分佈在14個主題展區。

談起書展，許多人或許會聯想到割價傾銷、人潮洶湧，去年參觀書展人數高達30萬，也確實給人如此印象。

城大出版社過去十幾年來一直參與這一盛會，今年也不例外。書展每年設置「大學坊」展區，推廣學術著作等嚴肅讀物，為本地愛書人士提供多種類優質書籍。

今年城大的展區位於一號展覽廳中央（編號1D-A28），是人流匯聚之處，共有六個展位，面積為歷屆書展最大，不但將推出多部新書，還將以優惠價銷售所有參展書籍。展位內備有城大的相關資訊，並設有獎問答遊戲，幫助市民認識城大。

近年來，電子出版的發展和社交網絡平台的興起，成為全球出版界的話題。今年書展中的亞洲出版座談會，也邀得海外及本地學者前來討論電子出版。城大出版社社長鄺子器先生透露，城大出版社正積極籌備出版電子書，期望在今後推出最初數本電子書，並在網絡上發放資訊。

城大出版社還推出「關心青少年系列」中的《青年、隱蔽與網絡世界——去權與充權》、《Youth and Consumption》兩書，剖析隱蔽青年問題及青少年消費現象。叢書的主編、應用社會科學系盧鐵榮教授指出，這些著作旨在將學者的研究成果貢獻給社會大眾，以期推動社工、教師、家長等各界人士一同關心現今青少年面對的困難，幫助他們健康成長。另外，應用社會科學系副教授桑戴維先生指出，新出版的《日語會話——日語.廣東話.普通話》，另一新作是由教育發展及通識教育處副處長桑戴維先生及專上學院語文學部講師村上仁合撰的《日語會話——日語，廣東話，普通話》。