Focus

New face, new ideas

By Michelle Leung

Before he started his new job as Provost, Professor Ellis talked about his ideas for achieving the academic goals set out in the Strategic Plan 2010–2015. The theme of the talk was "Promoting a culture of discovery and innovation at CityU," and the meeting took place on 10 August.

Professor Ellis started his presentation with a list of drivers for change at CityU. He said that the Strategic Plan, the Academic Development Proposal for submission to the University Grants Committee for the 2012–15 funding triennium as well as local and global competition in the tertiary education sector presented CityU with a number of opportunities.

A US-based scholar who began his academic career with the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1977, Professor Ellis said he would use the experience he had acquired in the tertiary education sector in the US to help CityU make the most of these opportunities to serve Hong Kong, China and the world.

Discovery-enriched Curricula

Professor Ellis said the proposed “Discovery-enriched Curricula” were entirely focused on helping students to develop in the strategic area of learning and career development. “In the end, we are working here for the students,” he said.

(continued on next page)
A key objective will be to enable all CityU students to have the chance to make an original discovery, to communicate that discovery and to understand the significance of their discovery, he said. “This will be an integral part of their education. Through this approach, CityU students can develop excellence in professional education and research, real-world skills, creativity, leadership, risk-taking, networks, tolerance and ethics.”

The new Provost said that the way we integrate the core curriculum of the new 4-year degree programme with general education courses will play a crucial role in enriching students’ learning experience. He emphasised the importance of linking courses thematically, leading to the creation of learning communities. Using the example of the Museum of Modern Art’s projects for New York’s waterfront, he suggested that the implications of rising sea level as a result of climate change could be studied from different perspectives, bringing together architects, economists, engineers, environmental designers, and poets.

Foundational courses for CityU students can provide an introduction to making discoveries in a disciplinary or interdisciplinary field, Professor Ellis said. Using an introductory course to biological sciences as another example, he further illustrated how first-year students could be inspired by courses that make them partners in the process of discovery.

**Fostering sustainability and innovation**

Campus planning and development is another strategic area prioritised by the University. According to Professor Ellis, Hong Kong is in some respects already a global leader of sustainability in terms of its high urban density and low transport-related energy consumption. As a university in the centre of the city, CityU is the ideal location for a “living laboratory” that can implement, for example, use of energy dashboards, solar panels and micro-weather stations for the campus. The campus can use its expertise to contribute to sustainability efforts more broadly in Hong Kong and China.

The recent success of a team of three students winning the HSBC Young Entrepreneur Awards is an excellent example of what the University has been doing in fostering innovation and knowledge transfer, Professor Ellis pointed out. The students proposed a business plan to commercialise transgenic fish technology pioneered by Professor Cheng Shuk Han, Department of Biology and Chemistry, to test food and healthcare products. Professor Ellis believes that establishing a skunkworks project where students can develop innovations can further enhance new ways of thinking and lead to applications that can reach the marketplace to benefit society.

**Culture of inclusiveness**

Professor Ellis reiterated the importance of a culture of inclusiveness, one that celebrates differences, provides a safe and welcoming environment for all and supports team-based projects that promote diversity. “The University regards human resources as its most valuable asset,” he said.

He proposed some ideas for recognising outstanding team performance with university-level awards such as internal sabbatical opportunities and interdisciplinary centres to encourage team-based projects.

Professor Ellis concluded his presentation by inviting all colleagues to work together to embrace change. “Making CityU a racehorse campus takes a dedicated team!” he said.
A grandfather’s legacy
By Michael Gibb

Liverpool is one of England’s most iconic cities. It’s a metropolis famed for its accent, humour and resilience, where the Beatles penned their first songs and football fans flock to watch one of the world’s most famous clubs. But less well known today is Liverpool’s historic connection with China.

“Liverpool is home to the oldest Chinese community in Europe,” says Professor Gregory Lee, the new Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Chair Professor of Chinese and Transcultural Studies. He knows the community well.

“I lived there with my grandfather until I was eight,” he says. “I used to accompany him around Chinatown where he was the leader of the Chinese community.”

The story of Professor Lee’s grandfather, Chan Lee, is not an unusual one for Chinese immigrants who came to live and work in England, and it’s one that eventually propelled Professor Lee into a career as a sinologist.

“My grandfather was born at the end of 19th century in Nanhai, now a district of Guangzhou,” Professor Lee explains. “He was orphaned when his father, a herbalist, died in a squall crossing the Pearl River, and he went to live in Macau with an aunt. He had wanted to take the civil service exams but they were abolished in 1905. He then trained to be an accountant in Hong Kong but he couldn’t get a job under the British so he bought a ticket to Liverpool. He left Hong Kong in 1909 and arrived in 1911.

Apparently, Chan Lee had put his accountancy skills to good use on the journey over. He arrived at Liverpool docks a relatively wealthy man, having gambled with his fellow passengers on the way over. But Professor Lee says few other records or stories survive. As with other immigrant families in England in the 1920s and 1930s, the emphasis was on integration. The focus was on the future, not the past.

“It’s my generation that has now become interested in the history of the Chinese communities in England and Europe, and it’s that interest that has fired much of my career in Chinese Studies,” he says.

Professor Lee enrolled at the London School of Oriental and African Studies in 1975 and quickly became interested in classical and modern Chinese literature. After graduating in 1979, he studied political economy at Peking University and returned to SOAS to complete a PhD in Chinese Literature in 1985.

Later his research began to concentrate on cultural representations of China and the Chinese, migration and diasporas, and postcoloniality, a journey that led him back to Liverpool, his grandfather and The Chinatown Project.

“The aim of The Chinatown project is to record and preserve the history of the Liverpool Chinatown and its inhabitants and compare its history and experience with those of other communities throughout the Chinese diaspora,” he says.

The project involves the universities of Lyon and Sun Yat-sen, and it has the support of the local government and community in Liverpool, Professor Lee says.

“We would like to tie the project with cultural heritage programmes at CityU,” Professor Lee says. “It’s now just a question of raising about £20 million.”

The project has run foul of the current economic crisis but Professor Lee said he is hoping to re-launch it with assistance from Hong Kong.

For more on The Chinatown Project, visit www.chinatownmuseum.org.
Orientation for new faculty members

By Ellen Chan

The Human Resources Office put together a two-day orientation programme to help new colleagues understand CityU’s work environment and development strategies. The content of the sessions was provided by members of senior management and the programme was held on 6 and 10 September.

In his welcoming address, Professor Way Kuo, University President, outlined CityU’s five major strategic development plans. “I believe teaching and research complement each other, and so I recommend that colleagues teach students the knowledge generated from research,” he said. “Also, I suggest colleagues collaborate with faculty in different departments and conduct research together to respond to the ever-changing needs of society.”

Professor Paul Lam Kwan-sing, Vice-President (Student Affairs), explained the details of the University’s preparatory work and pilot schemes for the new 4-year undergraduate programme, while Professor Julia Tao Lai Po-wah, Chief-of-Staff, said colleagues should instill values on top of teaching students knowledge as the University aims to develop students into responsible, global citizens who are both biliterate and trilingual.

During the event, Professor Chan Chi-hou, Acting Provost, presented the distinguished achievements of CityU’s teachers and students, and Professor Hui Yer-van, Associate Dean of Chow Yei Ching School of Graduate Studies, introduced the University’s research projects.

Praise for generosity on campus

By Scarlett Leung

Best Participation Award
- City University of Hong Kong Press
- Development Office
- Enterprise Solutions Office
- Governance in Asia Research Centre
- Internal Audit Office
- Student Development Services

Top Departmental Staff Donation Award
- Office of the Provost

Highest Average Departmental Staff Donation Award
- Office of the Provost

Top Outstanding Staff Giving Club Ambassador Award
- Ms Hovey Chui Kit-chun (Internal Audit Office)
- Ms Chung Sai-lin (Student Development Services)
- Ms Kitty K Y Wong (Enterprise Solutions Office)
- Ms Kris F Y Yuen (City University of Hong Kong Press)
- Mr Paul P B Yuen (City University of Hong Kong Press)
- Ms Vienne Chau Man-kit (Development Office)
Buildings for the future

By Michael Gibb

The construction projects underway on campus aimed at creating more space for teaching and learning are progressing well, according to Mr K Y Wong, the Director of Campus Development and Facilities Office (CDFO).

“We have major capital projects underway and each constitutes a vital part of the University’s strategic development,” he said.

Users of the Creative Media Centre (CMC), a landmark nine-storey edifice on Cornwall Street to the north of the campus, are scheduled to start progressively moving in over the next few months. They included School of Creative Media, Department of Computer Science, Department of Media and Communication, and the Center for Applied Computing and Interactive Media, a transdisciplinary facility.

“Before users move in, CDFO will conduct building services tests and cleaning,” Mr Wong said. “One of the most important jobs is to have all the specialised equipment installed and tested.” The unique building façade has been designed to inspire creativity, innovation and productivity. The building will contain labs, lecture and screening rooms and research facilities for training a new generation of transmedia specialists, Mr Wong said.

Next to the CMC is another major project, Student Hostel Phase 4, due for completion at the end of next year. “This building is comparatively straightforward,” Mr Wong said. It will offer around 700 bed spaces for students in two blocks. In addition, there will be a Sky Garden and communal space for students to mingle and discuss their studies.

More bed spaces will be available at Student Hostel Phase 5, a project located in a rural section of Ma On Shan near Wu Kai Sha Station. The University is currently working on a feasibility study with the HKSAR Government and hopes to provide around 1,250 bed spaces for local and non-local students. The commute door-to-door from the proposed site of Student Hostel Phase 5 to campus in Kowloon Tong takes approximately 45 minutes, and the current schedule puts the completion of this project in 2015.

Back on campus, Academic 3 (formerly the Academic and Administration Building) is also well underway, Mr Wong said, adding that the current Academic Building will be renamed Academic 1.

“The current plan is that the 19-storey high block of Academic 3 will contain offices and teaching and research labs plus a canteen. The top two floors have been earmarked for venues for management meetings. The low block will mainly contain classrooms and learning space,” he said.

The latest anticipated completion date for the whole project is mid 2013. “We have contingency plans for any delays, a necessary feature of any major works project, and we are continually seeking input from departments and administration offices on their requirements for the use of the new premises,” he said.

Meanwhile, Academic 2 (formerly the Community College of City University Building) is nearing completion. “The building has been topped out,” Mr Wong said, meaning that the major structures are in place. Project managers are now running building services checks and tests on the electrical and mechanical installations. The current plan is to have this building in operation by the spring of 2011.

Last but certainly not least, the CityU (Shenzhen) Research Institute Building will open next month as a permanent base for the University’s applied research, incubation and teaching activities on the mainland. The Grand Opening is scheduled for 20 October.
A writer from birth

By Michael Gibb

Novelists are often asked, “When did you start writing?” But to Xu Xi, City's inaugural Writer-in-Residence, the question is superfluous.

“I've always been a writer,” she says. Her first publication was a composition about the beauty of Victoria harbour at night. It was published in the South China Morning Post when she was 11.

“That was an essay but I was always writing fiction, from when I was about 7 or 8.” Most of her early scribblings were also printed in the SCMP. “They used to be a child’s corner in the paper that printed poems and stories written by kids.

The urge to write came from within. Xu Xi, an Overseas Chinese Indonesian who spoke English at home and Cantonese with friends, grew up in 1960s Hong Kong, a city largely replete with its literary output. Creative writing was not encouraged at school or home, but the children pushed their children, as they do today, towards more “sensible” subjects like the sciences and economics.

Xu Xi’s saviour was the local library. “I used to go every Saturday on my own. I read everything — comics, especially Superman and Batman, Jane Austen, books on Whittmber Heights and Jane Eyre, even the Eid Byton books, mythology! I read it all.”

Her parents would read to her, too, and bought her books, even though they were expensive items back then. So absorbed was she in literature, the would-be novelist was her mother told her and then “read” them to impose guests from a picture book she placed on her lap. This was when she was about 3, before she knew the alphabet.

Perhaps the biggest inspiration for the young novelist-to-be was a gifted aunt with a knack for narrative.

Xu Xi holds a copy of her latest novel, Habitat of a Foreign Sky. By Michael Gibb

“When did you start writing?” she was asked. The first things she began writing were things like the story of her family's migration after World War I. She kept putting it to paper. By the time she was 11, she had completed a novel.

She took up writing as a profession after attending university in the U.S. In 2002, she was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. In 2003, she was awarded the ﬁrst Prime Minister’s Literary Award, the highest literary honour granted to a Singaporean writer.

As for Xu Xi, she has published eight books of ﬁction and non-ﬁction, and held a number of distinguished residencies, including the Bedell Distinguished Visiting Writer at the University of Iowa's

People

2010年9月 人物

Linkage Quiz

When will the City’s Research Institute Building open?

A: 2010年9月

B: 2011年9月

C: 2012年9月

D: 2013年9月

Lucky draw results for last Linkage quiz in Issue 9, September 2010

Wong Cheuk-ming (AMK) 1
Ng Chiu-chong (AMK) 2
Chan Man-fung (AMK) 3
Luk Siu-ki (AMK) 4

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