

Honorary Fellow Mr Benjamin Kwok Chan-yiu

Citation written and delivered by Professor William Wan Piu

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President:

Mr Benjamin Kwok Chan-yiu is a leader in the Hong Kong electrical manufacturing industry. For more than 30 years, Mr Kwok has demonstrated his extraordinary business acumen and outstanding leadership skills. Mr Kwok traces his ancestry to Chinese emigrants in Vietnam. His family moved to Hong Kong when Mr Kwok was still a child. The first few years were not easy. Yet, Mr Kwok did not allow the straitened circumstances of the family to hold him back. Instead, he set his mind on running his own business. After he graduated from secondary school, he worked for a few years in his father's business before setting up Kwonnie Electrical Products Limited with some friends in 1980. Today, he is the managing director of the company.

Kwonnie specialises in electrical appliances for the kitchen, floor maintenance, personal care and other uses. The company has recorded a number of impressive achievements and is now an internationally known manufacturer of household electric appliances. In recognition of the important contributions that he makes to Hong Kong society and its electric industry, Mr Kwok was honoured with the Young Industrialist Award of Hong Kong by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries in 1997. He has since served as the Honorary President of the Hong Kong Young Industrialists Council and the Honorary Secretary of the Foundation under the Council. He is also Honorary President of the Hong Kong Electrical Appliance Industries Association, a mentor of the Trade and Industry Department's SME Mentorship Programme, a member of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries (Electrical and Optical Products Group), and Vice-President of Dongguan City Association of Enterprises with Foreign Investment.

Mr Kwok has a profound understanding of the art of management. Advocating that “there is only sunset management but never sunset industry,” he believes that management determines the success or failure of a business. Managing work, he asserts, is in the end the art of managing people, and one should not adhere blindly to the rules or be straitjacketed by the system. There are now about 2,500 people under his employment, and yet, under his leadership, this massive team works as a coherent whole. In the discussion of the company’s business, Mr Kwok upholds the principle of open and honest exchange, as he encourages his colleagues to give full expression to their views, regardless of their position in the company. Mr Kwok makes it a point to introduce to the company the most up-to-date management models. He regularly holds team-building activities, in which he also participates, intermingling with his staff to cultivate a strong sense of teamwork.

Mr Kwok’s ties with CityU date back to 2003 when he launched a manufacturing enterprise management programme in collaboration with CityU. To instill a spirit of life-long learning, he sponsored members of the management echelons of his company to enroll on a postgraduate programme in management at CityU. For himself, Mr Kwok graduated from the University’s EMBA in 2007 and has since then become an active alumnus. He is a founding member of CityU’s Eminence Society, a member of the Court, an Honorary Member of the Alumni Giving Club, Honorary Vice-President of the CityU Foundation, a member of the Foundation’s Alumni Advancement Committee and a member of the CityU Industrial and Business Leaders Circle. Over the years, he has given generously to his alma mater in support of various research endeavors as well as setting up internships for students to gain real work experience.

Mr Kwok has a profound personal understanding of the discrepancy in wealth in Hong Kong. He believes that people in the corporate sector should give back to society. With this lofty goal in mind, Mr Kwok is an enthusiastic philanthropist, giving generously to education development

and disaster relief projects. For many years, he has sponsored the Vocational Training Council's Outstanding Industrial Attachment Scholarship, which benefits students from a cross-section of backgrounds. He also helps disadvantaged students with a lack of financial resources in mainland China to finish their university studies. In times of natural disaster, Mr Kwok is quick to raise funds for immediate relief work as well as the long-term reconstruction of affected areas.

Mr Kwok looks to the younger generation for the continued growth of Hong Kong. He encourages them to be bold, to experiment, to be focused on their work and be appreciative of what they find in people. He hopes that the youth will remain persistent in times of difficulty, and most importantly, will not approach life in a cynical or otherwise negative way.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, Mr Chairman of the Council and Mr President, Mr Benjamin Kwok Chan-yiu is wise, pragmatic and hardworking, all of which have made him the successful entrepreneur that he is. He deserves our highest admiration for his deep compassion for the disadvantaged in the community and for the helping hand that he extends to the youth. I respectfully present to the University Mr Benjamin Kwok Chan-yiu for the conferment of an Honorary Fellowship from City University of Hong Kong.