

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa
A Citation



Professor the Honourable Arthur Kwok Cheung Li
MA, MD, BChir (Cantab), DLitt (Hon), DSc (Hon),
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In 1982, Professor Arthur K C Li returned to his native Hong Kong to take up the founding Chair in Surgery at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, having completed his Doctor of Medicine at the University of Cambridge. Ten years later he became Dean of Medicine, and in 1996 was elevated, for his foresight and progressive spirit, to the Vice-Chancellorship. In 2002, he retired as Vice-Chancellor and accepted appointment as Secretary for Education and Manpower in the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. From thence on he moves to a higher plane of service for the community in which he seeks the furtherance of the welfare of the entire population of Hong Kong.

Professor Li came from an illustrious family in Hong Kong. The Li family had migrated from Heshan in Guangdong and established their business in Hong Kong, and Arthur Li is of the fourth generation. The family has produced many eminent personages who have distinguished themselves in a wide variety of business pursuits and public services.

Arthur Li was brought up in a family that stressed discipline and traditional Chinese culture. Upon finishing school at St Paul's Co-educational College, he went to England at the age of 16 for matriculation studies and then to pursue university education in medicine at King's College Cambridge, and then the Middlesex Hospital Medical School. After graduation he stayed on in Britain for specialist training and research. From 1977 to 1980 he took up a fellowship to do research and to lecture at the Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. His specialties consist of hepato-pancreato-biliary surgery, as well as surgery of the upper abdomen. In 1980 he joined the Royal Free Hospital in London as a Consultant, and received his Doctor of Medicine degree at Cambridge the next year.

Upon joining the Chinese University, Professor Li showed remarkable capability and flair in the many duties he took up. Under his leadership the Department of Surgery developed, over a mere decade, into a centre of international renown. Professor Li was twice elected Dean of Medicine, in 1992 and 1995, and he pursued the business of the Faculty with great enthusiasm, improving the curriculum, enhancing faculty strength and providing for the most updated equipment and facilities. Landmark achievements during his Deanship include the establishment of the Departments of Nursing and Pharmacy, and the only academic Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences in Hong Kong. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Hong Kong Cancer Institute, the first Skin Bank in Hong Kong, and an integrated training centre for endoscopic surgery. With him at the helm, the Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese



University introduced new diagnostics tests and treatments for cancer, and new surgical treatments for burns, performed the territory's first paediatric life-related liver transplant; the Faculty also researched on and introduced advanced endoscope surgical techniques and bone marrow transplant on young children. The Faculty also pioneered "Hong Kong Flap" surgery and had many record achievements in in vitro fertilization.

As Vice-Chancellor, Professor Li devoted all his energy and attention to the development of the University. First he put his weight behind academic freedom and independence, and spared no effort in maintaining the University's spirit and tradition as embodied in the University motto. At the same time, he strenuously sought management efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the University's operations, while maintaining high standards in admission, faculty recruitment, curriculum development and assessment. He was keenly aware of community needs and new departments and programmes launched during his vice-chancellorship include Hotel Management, Chinese Medicine, Molecular Biotechnology, Language Education, Risk Management and E-Commerce. These new endeavours will help Hong Kong meet challenges in the new knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, with the globalized economy becoming ever more tightly woven, Professor Li sought to strengthen the University's links with institutions outside Hong Kong and to raise its reputation in the international arena. He believed that the University's research could only be improved if it was founded upon an efficient and effective, quality-oriented system, and with that belief he greatly encouraged faculty research. He spared no effort in assisting students to improve their Chinese and English. Through improvements to General Education programmes and College life, and strengthened ethical education and leadership training, he showed his commitment to providing for an environment conducive to student growth.

The Chinese University achieved unprecedented results in research under Professor Li, taking the lead among local tertiary institutions in terms of the Area of Excellence programme, in competition for Research Grants Committee funding, in outstanding research results as well as in research student numbers. On the other hand, the management efficiency of the Chinese University also received commendation from the University Grants Committee. Professor Li was greatly admired as a champion of the University's cause in the fight for public funding and coming away deservedly with the largest slice of the pie. Professor Li was also active and successful in fund raising, bringing recognition and an additional sources of support for the University's activities.

An ambitious campus development programme took place during Professor Li's term, with the erection of various teaching and research buildings, planning for the teaching hotel, acquisition of the Teaching Centre at Central at the Bank of America Tower, and the setting up of a community college in collaboration with outside organizations. Through six years of strenuous efforts Professor Li has left the Chinese University an institution whose achievements are recognized throughout the world. The University itself, fully independent, is teeming with vitality while to the community at large it is a beacon of light. It works closely with the



business sector in projects that are aimed at Hong Kong's social and economic progress, and the University's confidence and pride in itself have never been higher. In 2002, the MBA programme at the Chinese University was rated the best in the Asia-Pacific region. It was Professor Li's declared objective, as he assumed the Vice-Chancellorship, that the Chinese University should be developed into an institution of international renown. The Chinese University has indeed gone from strength to strength, fully confident of its own potential for growth and development. This is a matter very dear to Professor Li's heart and I am sure he is proud of what the University has achieved.

Just when everything was progressing according to plan at the Chinese University, at a time reaped, the stern and public-minded Arthur Li, forever with the greatest good for the greatest number in mind, decided in mid 2002 to accept an invitation from the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to take up the office of Secretary for Education and Manpower. Like the master mariners of old who has tired of the peace and quiet of harboured anchorage, he must sail into the open sea to discover new worlds, braving storm and weather and putting himself to rigorous tests and disciplines.

Education is an enterprise with a long time horizon, and results are not to be seen soon. At a time when educational reform was all the rage, Professor Li gallantly put down his work on hand and took the heavy burden upon himself, with courage and firmness of purpose. Steeped in the Confucian classics, Professor Li was of course familiar with the saying in the Analects: "the knowledgeable is not in doubt, the benevolent is not worried, and the courageous is not afraid." He was fully aware of the risks and pitfalls associated with his new appointment, but for the great common good he did not hesitate. He believes that "talk is easy but action more difficult; action is easy but results are more difficult." It is therefore his conviction that, as long as there is nothing for which he will regret, and as long as he has tried his best, he will not give much thought to personal gain or loss, praise or disapproval.

The work of the Education and Manpower Bureau consists of providing education and training for the citizens and putting Hong Kong's vast manpower resources to appropriate use. As Secretary he takes the primary, secondary and tertiary education systems upon himself. However, despite the best efforts and the greatest diligence, there can be no satisfaction for all men in all situations. Hence, from the beginning of his Secretaryship, Professor Li maintained a broad perspective but at the same time tackled one problem at a time. The Hong Kong education system is loaded with problems accumulated over years. The Education and Manpower Bureau must move with caution, listening to different voices and providing support to those who must implement the reforms.

Professor Li hopes that the education system to be gradually phased in would not be a radical one and that policies will be introduced gradually and in moderation. His first aim is to reduce the pressure that examinations exert on students. Secondly, he advocates school-based management and the grant of autonomy to the schools. Third, he would strengthen language education for biliteracy and trilingualism among our students. He is also fully committed to a



system with three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school and four years of university, under which all students may, with the assistance of their teachers and the support of their parents, receive the best education possible.

Professor Li's ideal is to fulfil three objectives during his term of office: first, that all students in Hong Kong may enjoy their studies, second, that all teachers in Hong Kong may enjoy teaching, and third, that all parents in Hong Kong may develop confidence in the new education system, and that they no longer have to exert themselves, both physically and mentally, in search of the right school places for their children.

Despite these ideals Professor Li is aware of practical difficulties in the face of fiscal stringency and reduced budgets. Great effort does not always lead immediately to great results. As the saying goes, "It takes a year for the flower to be cultivated but the blooms are appreciated only for ten days." Be that as it may, it has not deterred the veteran administrator from tilling his garden with diligence. Just over a year in office, he has already reviewed and reflected upon the various components of his portfolio. To streamline decision-making, he took the lead in merging the Bureau with the Department, and in effective cost-cutting, setting an example for his subordinates to follow. Furthermore, Professor Li has been innovative in manpower planning. Learning from experience in Europe, the United States and Australia, Professor Li planned to introduce the qualifications framework to provide a uniform and structured system of qualifications in every trade and profession, for the better deployment of human resources in various industries.

It is difficult to enumerate all the awards and honours that Professor Li has received for his distinction in medicine, education and social service. The more prominent of these include the Gold Bauhinia Star of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, an Honorary Doctor of Letters from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Honorary Fellowship of the American College of Surgeons, Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Society of Medicine of the United Kingdom, and Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland. The President's Gold Medal of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh awarded in 1996 honoured his distinguished academic achievement and special contribution to the surgical profession, and Professor Li was the first Chinese recipient of this distinction. Despite his heavy public duties and extremely busy schedule, Professor Li has published over 300 academic papers over the years, marking his contribution to the world of learning.

Professor Li perpetuates his family's time-honoured tradition of philanthropy and public service. In 1983 he was elected President of the Hong Kong Surgical Society, which under his leadership eventually evolved into the Hong Kong College of Surgeons. He was a member of the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee, the Education Commission, the Hospital Authority, and the Hong Kong Medical Council, and he was also the Chairman of the Governing Committee of the United Christian Hospital. In his capacity as the Vice-President of the Association of University Presidents of China, he made substantial contributions to academic



exchanges and interflow between universities in Hong Kong and on the Mainland. He was also a Hong Kong Affairs Adviser to the Central People's Government, as well as a member of the Preparatory Committee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the National People's Congress. Currently he is a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and a Justice of the Peace of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Mr Chairman, in consideration of his immense contribution to education and medical services in Hong Kong, I present Professor Arthur K C Li for the award of the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.