



An address given by Professor Sun Sai Ming, Samuel, BSc, MSc, PhD

Today, The Chinese University of Hong Kong observes the ninth conferment ceremony for honorary University Fellows. My fellow-recipients have, in the past, participated in and contributed to the development of the Chinese University, each in his own territory and after his own manner. The accolade that we are receiving today is overwhelming, and it is my pleasurable duty to offer, on behalf of myself and my fellow-recipients, our most heartfelt gratitude to the University.

I graduated from The Chinese University of Hong Kong in the third year of his history, having attended the Farm Road campus of New Asia College from 1962 to 1966. *Tempus fugit*, and half a century has elapsed in what seems to be the twinkling of an eye. Last November, fellow-students in my class had a reunion in Hong Kong, and we visited the old campus of New Asia College which still occupies that corner of Farm Road. We were in the assembly hall, the library and the laboratories, and the images of Dr. Ch'ien Mu, Professor Tang Chun-I, Professor Ou Tsuin-chen and teachers in our Department vividly sprang to our minds, as did the visages of classmates and events of the bygone years. It was almost 50 years ago, and one cannot help wondering why their memory is still being retained with such lucidity.

I believe that that memory holds fast because when we were students at New Asia College, the campus was miniscule and the student population, being in the hundreds, was small. There were only 15 students in my class and, in what was necessarily a well-knit community, deep friendship and concern for each other developed among teachers and students, who interacted closely on a daily basis over a span of four years. Apart from this, I am also convinced that the hardship experienced by New Asia during its early days, as the College struggled against all odds to develop itself into an academic institution, has had its effect on us too. During my 25 years of work and study in the United States, and especially in those days when I had to endure the severity of the Wisconsin winter, my education and experience at New Asia College had, when I look back, indeed provided me with great support of pivotal importance. In more recent years I have participated in the establishment of the S.H. Ho College, and the activities involved have further strengthened my understanding of and conviction about the idea of the college system.

The traditional Chinese college had its origin in the Five Dynasties that ruled the country after the demise of the Tang Dynasty, about a thousand years ago. Most of the early colleges were private foundations, with endowment for building and farming fields, an extensive collection of books and the gathering of teachers and students for the conduct of lectures. While much emphasis was placed on exegesis, dialogue, discourse and debate among teachers and the students, the art of handling business and interpersonal relationships, and the cultivation of a virtuous character, were accorded the greatest importance. In these colleges teachers and students led harmonious lives in each other's cordial companionship. On the other hand, the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge have also been in existence for seven or eight hundred years.



It is a tradition of their college life that teachers and students both reside on the premises and, while discourse may touch on anything under the sun, their tutorial system and attention for each individual student stands out as unique manners through which characters are shaped, and talents developed. However, the college system was latterly criticised for being of little practical use. Indeed it has been a recent trend in western higher education for specialization and pragmatism to dominate, with increasingly refined categorization of subjects and disciplines. Teaching has gradually gyrated towards classroom lectures, with corresponding diminution in the time allowed for teacher-student exchanges on topics and issues outside of the minutely defined curriculum. Consequently there is much alienation between the academics and the students, and the golden thread that bound education and life together had come to be severed.

Since its inception in 1963, The Chinese University of Hong Kong has developed itself, during over 40 years of growth and expansion, into a comprehensive research university of considerable international renown. The University's academic affairs are being carried out through eight Faculties and the Graduate School, with subjects and disciplines extensively developed to include 116 major and minor programmes at the undergraduate level. Teaching is administered through classroom teaching in the main. Be that as it may, the Chinese University has, in spite of the daily mounting pressure coming from professionalization and marketism, always insisted on the importance of general education, and sought the development of the students' breadth of knowledge in addition to specialization in their chosen fields. Furthermore, the Chinese University also prides itself on another important characteristic, which is its college structure. The University was initially made up of Chung Chi, New Asia and United Colleges, with the addition of Shaw College at a later stage. In the past 40 odd years the Chinese University has stood firm on the integrity of its college system. With the forthcoming return to the four-year undergraduate programme, the University has decided to establish five new Colleges, among which there will be some smaller establishments each with an enrolment of three to six hundred students. These will be fully residential institutions with communal dining. The nine Colleges of the University will each be distinguished by its own idea and character. The choice of college is at the discretion of individual students, and this option further strengthens the effectiveness of the college system. Thus, to sum up, The Chinese University of Hong Kong follows the trend of the modern university to meticulously categorise the academic disciplines it teaches, professionalizes the educational programmes it has to offer, and prepares the students well for career development after graduation. These are supplemented with the person-oriented educational concept that is embedded in the college system, whereby a holistic education programme involving training in character building, interpersonal skills and coping with business and life in general is provided. In a future society where we can expect life to go on at even a faster pace, and where specialization will deepen with its concomitant alienation among people, I believe that the value of an education pursued in a college environment will be even more manifest than before. It is well understood that the operation of the college system has posed an enormous additional demand for monetary, material and human resources, and I am very proud of the firmness of purpose and unswerving efforts of the alma mater on the



issues of the college system and general education. Indeed I would like to offer what little support I can, and join efforts with my colleagues in the University, in fostering these two worthy causes.

The Chinese University campus stands on 134 hectares of land, which has been transformed from barren hilltops to a campus with 154 buildings distributed among wooded, hilly terrains. As it looks out to the Tolo Harbour from a great distance, the campus has been likened to the "City upon a Hill". Our academics and students, now over 20,000 strong, spend their days here in pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning and research. It is very much to be wished that everyone in the Chinese University will continue to treasure this collegiate university situated among the verdant hillocks, which has bred so many wonderful scholars. Let us work together to bring our City upon a Hill to a legendary stature. Thank you.