



## An address given by The Honourable Cheung Man Kwong, BSSc

Today, on this occasion when The Chinese University of Hong Kong confers its Honorary Fellowships, I feel extremely honoured to be giving this vote of thanks to the University on behalf of my fellow recipients – Mr Chung Wing Kok, Leslie, Professor Kuan Hsin Chi, Professor Lee Shiu Hung and Mr Mok Wah Chiu, Christopher.

I graduated from the Chinese University in 1978. Now when I revisit my alma mater 30 years on, the changes are remarkable. When the University was first built in Ma Liu Shui, which is now known as University Station, the hills were adorned only with sparse Chinese red pines. They were nicknamed "the bald hills" by the students in those days. But this was compensated by the glorious backdrop of the Tolo Harbour beyond, its splendour changing with the alternation of night and day. Much of its beauty has been captured in the poet Yu Kwang Chung's beautiful free verse and elegant prose. It was also where students would go boating at dusk. Late at night, one could even hear the fishing folks beat drums to frighten the fish into their nets. There is a saying that the beauty of a land nurtures great minds; the Chinese University is indeed one such place. No wonder it is ideal for the pursuit of knowledge.

The University Mall at the heart of the campus, the New Asia Amphitheatre, the United College Sculpture Garden and the Chung Chi College Chapel conjure up a lot of memories for those who have been through the student movements of the 1970's. That was the time when I first entered the University. There were all kinds of campaigns going on then, as students spoke out on the Chinese Language Movement, the Diaoyutai sovereignty issue, social awareness with the "Know China and Concern for Society" Movement, and the Golden Jubilee School Incident. These movements groomed generations of CU alumni with cherished ideals who are not afraid to commit themselves to their chosen causes. 30 years on, as I look around me, many of my fellow undergraduates, who were active figures in our days of youth, have all become pillars of society today. They stand testimony to the success of the education at the Chinese University and are its pride. As an alumnus returning to my alma mater to be conferred this honour, I would like to say two big 'thank you's, one for this honour and the other for the education it gave me.

I have engaged in education ever since I graduated 30 years ago. In the past 20 years, I have served as the Chairman of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, and a member of the Legislative Council for the education sector. Education in Hong Kong has undergone many changes: from the colonial days to post-handover, and from an elitist to a more populist system. Students' overall standards have remained very high. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Hong Kong students rank within the top three in science, mathematics and reading ability. This is the result of the emphasis placed on education by Hong Kong society as well as the tremendous efforts put in by educationists as a whole.

But Hong Kong cannot afford to be complacent, especially in an era of financial crisis and



globalization. Hong Kong people are facing global competition, and not least, challenge from the mainland. In this new millennium of competition, Hong Kong's biggest edge is its human capital and institutions. This will have to do with whether we can make continued progress in tertiary education and its education foundation, in order to become not only an education hub for Hong Kong and the mainland, but also a centre of human resources on the international front. Where there is education and talent, there is hope. This hinges upon whether Hong Kong can build on its foundation of freedom, rule of law and clean governance, a democratic system of universal suffrage to realize the goal of a Hong Kong run by Hong Kong people with a high degree of autonomy, as promised by the Basic Law.

An emphasis on education does not mean an increase in funding only; more important is the upholding of faith in education. As an alumnus of New Asia College, I am most touched and inspired by the spirit of the New Asia College Anthem. To quote:

*"Nothing left, in my hands,  
Journey's long, never ends,  
In the chaos, In my flight,  
Starved is my flesh, Forged is my soul,  
Let's march over life, Let's sing when we're tired,  
Pick the loads unbearable in our youth,  
Let's walk hand in hand."*

This anthem is about vision and aspiration, and speaks the Chinese intellectual ideal of "abiding by the chosen path of virtue". An unceasing keenness and an adherence to noble values have always been an admirable tradition of the college system of the Chinese University.

The four established colleges of the Chinese University, Chung Chi, New Asia, United and Shaw all uphold unique educational ideals and faith: Chung Chi's is *Ad Excellentiam* ("In Search of Excellence"); New Asia's is *Chengming* ("Sincerity and Intelligence"); United's is *Mingde Xinmin* ("Make one's virtue shine and renew the people"); Shaw's is *Xiude Jiangxue* ("Cultivate Virtue and Pursue Knowledge"). Together with the five new colleges – Morningside College, S.H. Ho College, C.W. Chu College, Wu Yee Sun College and Lee Woo Sing College – they will enrich one another and form a strong force in the nurture of talent for Hong Kong and China. Who could have imagined 30 years ago that a small railway station in Ma Liu Shui would become a university town that was to nurture so many top talent? Who could have visualized the hilly town next to the Tolo Harbour stretching itself to Tai Shui Hang and Tai Po? Its campus may have undergone physical upheaval, but the University's faith in the nurture of talent and the pursuit of knowledge is never going to change.

The most memorable vegetation on the Chinese University campus has to be the azaleas and the Chinese red pines. The azaleas blossom with a melancholic beauty when in season, because it coincides with the examination season, and for those about to graduate they are reminded even more of the sadness of parting. The Chinese red pines, on the other hand,



are specially suited to the hard and shallow topsoil of the University. They green the hills, symbolizing the unflinching spirit of earlier generations of distinguished scholars in less privileged times. When I revisit this place after a thirty-year absence, I still have fond memories of those pines, especially my salad days when I would go picking pine cones with my girlfriend, now my wife. Those beautiful days are treasured memories that are as precious as the title of Honorary Fellow. So, thank you, the Chinese University, thank you once again.