

An Address given by Professor Andrew David Hamilton BSc, MSc, MA, PhD, FRS

I know that I speak for my fellow honorands, Dr Ronnie Chichung Chan, Professor Yang Fujia, and Dr Yang Leung Yin-fong Katie, when I say what an enormous pleasure and privilege it is to receive an honorary degree from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, in this, its Golden Jubilee Year. Our honorary degrees from this fine university are a distinction that we will bear with pride throughout the rest of our lives, and I know that this day is one that will stay with us forever.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong is a relatively youthful university, particularly compared with some of those in Western Europe. But age is not always a sign of accomplishment, and youth can of course be extremely precocious. My own institution, the University of Oxford, almost - but not quite - the oldest university in the world, has revelled in its association with The Chinese University of Hong Kong. This association has been expressed most recently through a memorandum of understanding that has established the Collaborating Centre for Oxford University and The Chinese University of Hong Kong for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response. The initial stage of its existence is nearing three years old and later today, I will have the pleasure of signing, together with Professor Sung, an extension to our agreement. Oxford's Nuffield Department of Medicine – researchers and students – have collaborated with colleagues in CUHK to establish a centre for research and expertise in the area of disaster and humanitarian response in the Asian Pacific region. The second phase of the Centre will see it evolve and develop into a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre, and take forward the development of online training that will be available to the many people working in this area already, or who wish to do so.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Oxford seem to me to share exactly the same values: a commitment to excellence in the teaching of our students; a commitment to excellence in the quality of our research; and a commitment also to sharing the fruits of our teaching and research to a broader constituency. The link between us – across many thousands of miles – is an example of an international approach to our work that characterizes the very best universities across the world. That is not to say that creating global links is the be all and end all – that one must reach out internationally at the expense of building and maintaining core competencies. Rather, an international outlook is important for building those core activities of research and education, and infuses and informs a university's other activities.

An international outlook can take a number of forms. A commitment to recruiting and retaining the best faculty members from around the world is essential, for how else can you be sure that you have the best means of delivering an excellent education to both undergraduates and research students? Opening your doors to international students is vital too, for otherwise how can you be sure that you are producing the best graduates, who have argued and challenged their teachers, and formed their own ideas and ways of looking at problems? And

you need the best researchers, who together with the faculty and their graduate students are able to take forward research at the highest level.

And an international university, almost by definition, must focus much of its research on international issues. Although national governments might view the purposes of excellent universities as strengthening national economies or turning out a supply of educated and articulate graduates able to think for themselves, increasingly our problems are international: the world economy; climate change; energy supply; migration; population health and the control of disease; the impact of an ageing population; international security and terrorism. These are big intractable issues that no single institution, no single state or nation can tackle by itself. We are all of us linked through our common humanity and citizenship of the planet.

So international universities have at their heart an ethos of service: service to the commonwealth of knowledge; service to their societies; service to humanity. Ladies and gentlemen, you see before you four proud and grateful honorands, who have each served society in our different way. That you have chosen to show your esteem for our labours is an honour and a privilege that we will never forget.

