

A Letter from the Dean of Students on Campus Freedom at CityU

6 September 2011

Dear students and alumni,

I am prompted to write this letter to you by some recent concerns regarding freedom of speech on campus raised by student bodies in Hong Kong, including our City University of Hong Kong Students' Union (SU). My attention was also drawn to the big character poster dated 31 August 2011 posted by a student on the campus Democracy Wall, and the Open Letter published by some alumni on Facebook on 1 September 2011.

Safeguarding Campus Freedom

I fully appreciate the concerns. I fully agree with the importance of safeguarding campus freedom. You may already know that the President has also issued a statement to the press in support of freedom of speech on campus, and the peaceful expression of diverse opinions as a response to the open appeal by the Hong Kong Federation of Students on 3 September 2011.

Relationship of Mutual Respect

As Dean of Students at City University of Hong Kong (CityU), I would like to emphasise the University's commitment to respecting the views of our students and supporting the work of SU to the best of our ability. Student development and success is our first principle. Under this principle, CityU has always maintained a cooperative partnership with SU based on mutual respect and open communication. We believe that this relationship is essential for the creation of the best possible learning environment for our students to learn how to develop their independence and initiative, and to manage their activities in a fruitful and responsible manner. Whenever there are regulations that need to be set or issues that need to be resolved between the University and SU regarding student matters, we always adopt a consultative and consensual approach and reach mutually acceptable solutions. There is never a lack of dialogue or consultation.

CityU Democracy Wall

Professor Way Kuo, University President, constantly reminds me and others that students come first in our University, and that freedom of enquiry and freedom of expression are core values at CityU. We firmly believe that our student leaders are capable of exercising these freedoms and managing their own affairs in a responsible and rational manner. A good example is Democracy Wall at CityU which has always been fully managed by SU. Even the regulations governing the use of Democracy Wall are formulated by students.

Another important point is CityU's Democracy Wall occupies one of the most prominent places available on the campus in Academic 1, right next to the entrance to the library, which is one of

our busiest areas. Democracy Wall can be seen by hundreds if not thousands of students, staff members and visitors every day as they take the escalator from our 3/F lobby to our 4/F lecture theatres. There is no attempt to make Democracy Wall less prominent by placing it under the escalators. In fact, when the University moved Democracy Wall to its present location in 2003, the views of SU were fully consulted and taken into account. Both sides had some very constructive exchanges during the consultation period to come up with an agreed upon location.

Dissemination of Information

Again under our principle of student priority, the University is always keen to facilitate students in carrying out their activities. It was an unfortunate misunderstanding in the Open Letter which claimed that CityU students had been prevented from distributing leaflets that criticised the government's proposed Pearl River Delta Bay Area Plan on campus in February of this year. The fact is CityU has a set of prescribed practices facilitating such kind of information dissemination in order to maintain order and safety on a busy campus. After receiving complaints from some students, the University management immediately held discussions with SU and the students on how to improve these practices. As a result, we have worked out a more satisfactory procedure with SU and made improvements. I am happy to add that, similar to Democracy Wall, SU is in charge of implementing the procedures governing leaflet distributions by students on campus.

Enhanced Cooperation and Support for SU

There is no question that students' freedoms are always respected on campus, though the interests of other campus users must also be taken into account. The student who placed the aforementioned poster on Democracy Wall mentioned the regulations governing the conduct of election campaigns for the student bodies on campus. I would like to point out that the election guidelines and safety measures governing these campaigns were established by SU and the University respectively, and both sides have worked together to ensure the smooth implementation of these regulations. In 2008, following complaints received from the Executive Committee of the Staff Association (SAEC) saying staff members were disturbed by the noise caused by these campaigns, we immediately initiated discussions with SU to seek mutually acceptable arrangements to reduce noise pollution during the campaign period. A similar approach applies to student orientation camps.

As a concrete gesture to support SU in its promotion of student activities, the University, after consulting SU, recently allocated over 10,000 square feet of new space on the ground floor of the newly opened Academic 2 for student activities. We also plan to double the office space used by SU and its associations in Academic 1 by turning over the space on the 7th floor currently managed by Student Development Services. We expect that the new space will soon be available to our students and student bodies after the necessary renovation and administrative procedures have been completed.

I also noticed reference was made in the Open Letter on 1 September 2011 to some recent disputes between the SAEC and the University. I do not have the space here to comment on this matter. However, I would like to invite you to visit this link: http://www6.cityu.edu.hk/puo/newscentre/attach/Response_to_SAEC_Allegations.pdf which gives details of a Resolution passed by the University Council on the SAEC. Please feel free to get in touch and further discuss the issue with me if you are interested.

As I have repeated, freedom of expression is a core value at CityU. The University is committed to this value and to the cooperative partnership with SU and alumni. I believe we can further promote this value together and improve our learning environment through supporting rational dialogue, peaceful exchanges and mutual respect.

Regards,

Chor-yung Cheung

Dean of Students

City University of Hong Kong

輔導長關於校園自由的一封信

各位同學、各位校友：

近日有香港的學生組織，包括香港城市大學學生會，對大學校園的言論自由表示關注；同時我亦留意到有本校學生於 2011 年 8 月 31 日在學生會民主牆上張貼大字報，並有校友於 2011 年 9 月 1 日在 Facebook 就有關議題刊載公開信。現特撰寫此信回應如下。

捍衛大學校園自由

我對此事深表關注，同時亦認同捍衛大學校園自由的重要性。我相信大家都知道，校長更在回應香港專上學生聯會於 2011 年 9 月 3 日發表的公開信時，聲明支持捍衛大學校園的言論自由及以和平方式表達不同意見。

互相尊重的夥伴關係

身為香港城市大學（城大）輔導長，我在此強調，大學尊重學生的意見，並致力支持學生會的工作。助學生成長、成材，是我們的首要原則。在此原則下，城大一直與學生會保持互相尊重、坦誠溝通的合作夥伴關係。我們相信，這種關係對於為學生創造良好的學習環境不可或缺，有利培養他們的獨立性和主動性，以有效而負責任的方式管理學生自己的活動。凡是遇到大學訂立的規則，或大學和學生會之間有事需要解決，都會一直保持對話和諮詢，透過洽商，達成共識，找到共同接受的解決方案。

城大民主牆

校長郭位教授經常提醒我和其他同事，大學須以學生為先，自由探索及表達意見是城大的核心價值。我們深信，城大的學生領袖能以負責任和理性的態度行使賦予的自由和管理自己的事務，民主牆便是一個極佳的例子。一直以來，民主牆都是由學生會全權管理，有關使用民主牆的規則也是由學生制訂的。

更重要的是，城大的民主牆設於全校最顯眼的一個位置，這個位於學術樓（一）鄰近圖書館的位置，是全校最繁忙的地點之一。每天有數百、甚至數千個學生、教職員及訪客從三樓大堂乘自動扶手電梯前往四樓各演講廳，均可看到民主牆。由此可見，校方並沒有將民主牆置於扶手電梯下以隱藏其位置之意圖。事實上，校方在 2003 年將民主牆遷往現在的位置時，曾充份徵詢並考慮到學生的意見，雙方在諮詢過程中均有建設性的交流，彼此達到共識。

資訊發放

大學一貫按學生為先的原則，盡力協助學生推行各項活動。因此，公開信指今年 2 月有城大學生於校內派發批評政府環珠江口宜居灣區計劃的單張時遭到阻止，有關指稱實屬誤

會。城大就資訊發放訂有相關準則，以確保人流密集的校園秩序良好。大學收到學生投訴後，馬上與學生會及學生商討，如何改善單張派發的安排。經商討後，我們與學生會就派發單張的安排達成了一致，改善了有關的程序。我很高興的再提一點，就是和民主牆一樣，學生在校內派發單張的規定，也是由學生會負責執行的。

加強與學生會合作、給予學生會更多支持

毫無疑問，學生在校園內的自由素來受到尊重，但我們亦要顧及校園其他使用者的利益。在民主牆上張貼海報的學生，提及校園內學生組織選舉活動操守的監管規則。我在此強調，有關規則及活動的安全措施，是分別由學生會及大學制定的，且雙方相互合作，以確保此類規則能夠順利施行。2008年，由於接獲教職員協會執行委員會投訴，表示選舉活動產生的噪音對教職員造成滋擾後，我們立即與學生會展開討論，尋求雙方可接受的安排，以減少選舉活動期間的噪音污染。同類安排亦適用於學生會迎新營。

為了以實際行動支持學生會及其活動，大學最近經諮詢學生會後，在新啟用的學術樓（二）闢出逾 10,000 平方呎空間，指定用於學生活動。我們亦計劃把目前由學生發展處管理的學術樓（一）七樓交給學生會，學生會及其屬會辦事處的面積因此可增加一倍。預計必需的裝修工程和行政工作完成後，不久即可供學生及屬會使用。

我亦注意到 2011 年 9 月 1 日的一封公開信，其中涉及教職員協會執委會與大學的一些事端。在此，恕我沒有足夠空間詳述此事，但你們可以登入以下網址，詳閱校董會通過的一份關於教職員協會執委會的議案：
（http://www6.cityu.edu.hk/puo/newscentre/attach/Response_to_SAEC_Allegations.pdf）。歡迎你們與我討論這一事件。

我再次重申，表達自由是城大的核心價值。大學致力保護這項核心價值，亦致力與學生會及校友共同合作。我相信，透過理性對話、平和的交流及互相尊重，我們可以齊心提升這一核心價值，共同建構我們的學習環境。

香港城市大學輔導長

張楚勇

2011 年 9 月 6 日