
President's Address for 2019 and 2020 CityU Graduation Ceremony

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President and University Distinguished Professor

It is a pleasure to be here today to celebrate the 2019 and 2020 Graduation Ceremony.

Only with passion can one significantly contribute to education

Throughout my academic career, the well-being and personal growth of students have been my priority. Consequently, I endeavour to participate enthusiastically in a range of student activities every year and prioritise communicating with students, parents, colleagues and alumni through meetings and casual gatherings.

For example, visiting the homes of students from various backgrounds is a great privilege. These gatherings allow me to understand the diversity of our students' learning and living environments, and enable us to provide better advice for them and support for others in general. Additionally, I believe some of you have run the Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon with me, possibly more than once, galloping in the wind on Hong Kong Island before dawn. Thanks to all the participating students and their families.

Unfortunately, just as the fish in the moat suffer if the city gates catch fire, the latter part of 2019 was a challenging period during which people conveyed their dissatisfaction with the government on vulnerable university campuses. Higher education is often weakened due to an undesirable and potentially volatile mix with politics. The 2020 pandemic has added insult to injury, coming on the heels of an increasing number of complaints about the difficulties that teachers and students face these days. Some disagreements were about the University but many more focused on campus safety and the impact of the social unrest on families, teaching, research, student learning and future careers.

The unrest fostered suspicion, confusion, violence and even bullying in our traditionally peaceful society. That is why it was so important that I moved quickly to establish CityU's Emergency Response Unit in August 2019. I contacted students who had been injured or arrested in the disturbances to ensure that their well-being was properly protected. Likewise, with the rapid spread of Covid-19, I have contacted all those who have been hospitalised.

In September 2019, I made time to join 22 vice-presidents, deans and department heads at the Orientation Camp where I encouraged freshmen to aspire to be the best, make new friends, and think independently, an appeal that I have made to students on many occasions.

While pursuing the truth is of paramount importance beyond receiving a degree or being a decent citizen, caring for others should not be seen as over-indulgence. There exists no compromise for teaching and research in learning. Always aiming high and behaving with dignity constitutes the right attitude to learning, and makes a university education both meaningful and worthwhile.

Only through curiosity can one learn from research

Our worldwide reputation is focused on professional education and problem-driven research and is growing despite the social disorder and the pandemic over the last 20 months. Our learning and research continue to offer new insights into a multitude of interdisciplinary areas. In fact, many of our major areas of academic focus have attained world-class status. I want to stress that most of this recognition is due to the extraordinary performance of CityU faculty. In fact, our graduates benefit from these successes without hardly ever noticing such input.

Due to the worsening job situation in 2019 and 2020, I allocated HK\$10 million to support CityU students' job landing in conjunction with the "CAReer Launch Scheme", an innovative online job-matching platform for the 2020 graduating students.

I am privileged to work with our colleagues and delighted that we have achieved so much. Notwithstanding these achievements, we must not rest on our laurels but instead should redouble our efforts to integrate teaching with research in order to strive for excellence.

On this very important day, please recognise that, being adults, you have now become a new influence in society, contributing to its well-being and accepting challenges with your head held high. We all need to give back to society to show our appreciation for the kindness and generosity that others have shown us. Much can be achieved with a positive and responsible mental approach to our responsibilities, forgoing what is desired in favour of what is needed.

I also want to emphasise how much we want you to stay in touch with your alma mater, your friends and professors. Please share with us your successful stories as your careers take root and grow. Your contributions to society as a whole will be a positive element in our continued success.

To draw to a close, I would like to offer you my sincere blessings by repeating the same suggestions that I made at the commencement of your studies: aspire to be the best, make new friends, and think independently.

Best wishes for a truly glittering future!
