A Message from Chairman of Convocation

As the new term of the Convocation Standing Committee starts it is timely for us to share with members our thoughts for the future directions of the Convocation. We think it is our duty to let every member know about what Convocation is and what role it could play in our University, especially now that our Centennial celebration is round the corner.

The word “Convocation” comes from the Greek ecclesia which, translated from Latin, means ‘calling together’ or ‘a group of people formally assembled for a special purpose’. In the academic arena it generally means a formal assembly or celebration in honour of the commencement of students’ academic careers.

Under the University’s Ordinance and Statutes, the Convocation is a body established officially (i.e., a statutory body) from members comprising all graduates, teachers and senior administrators of the University. Membership of Convocation gives our graduates an official channel to convey to the University their views about the University and participate in matters relating to its development. As all HKU graduates are members of the University for life, they are automatically members of the Convocation.

Over the years the functional role of our Convocation has evolved. At the moment our Standing Committee works through a number of sub-committees which focus separately on “University Affairs”, “Alumni and Community Affairs” and on “Communications”. At this defining moment on the eve of the University’s 100th Anniversary Celebration, we feel it is time for us to take stock of what we have achieved, re-examine our present situation and explore our directions for the future.

As the graduates of our University, we are proud of its accomplishments and contributions to society. At the same time it is also our duty to explore better ways of facilitating our Alma Mater to elevate onto new grounds. We feel it important for Convocation to play a supportive role in helping the development of our University. We have an official capacity to marshal valuable inputs from members in times of need of our University, and we envisage a partnership relation with the University rather than playing a monitoring role.

To better understand the University so we could provide constructive ideas from time to time, we shall initiate more interaction between Convocation and the University senior management in future. We have recently started to invite senior University academics to brief the Standing Committee on university development and other topics of common interest. This opportunity could also be extended to other alumni leaders in future.

Convocation could also launch large-scale forums and seminars from time to time to explore on issues of significant impact to our University, alumni and community at large. This has been done in the past and a notable example is the recent 2010 Convocation Forum on “HKU’s Development in the Mainland – Opportunities and Challenges”, which has attracted a lot of support from members. We intend to have more of these in future.

Convocation’s role to act as a bridge between the University and our graduates will always be an important part of our agenda. We now have over 140,000 Convocation members whom we need to reach out to enhance their connectedness.
with the University. As a first step, we shall work towards establishing a closer link with our more than 100 alumni bodies, and collaboratively cultivate a stronger sense of belonging and ownership within our alumni community.

The contemporary challenge to our new generations of students alters with the changing needs of society. Likewise, there will also be corresponding aspirations from our graduates and also expectations from society for our University to excel. What then should be the forward direction of the University for the next few decades? This is getting more crucial in the wake of the new 4-year curriculum of the University and the change in the economic structure locally, regionally and globally. As such, we need a wider platform for Convocation members to share and exchange ideas on the future development of our University, and to bring about a closer link between ‘town and gown’ through more active involvement of our alumni.

In 2009 we conducted an Alumni Survey and it is time to take a closer look at its detailed findings, monitor the present and project into the future. More light would then be shed on the future development of both the Convocation and the University in their interaction with alumni. On this same line of thought, Convocation will plan a series of alumni events during the year, which are intended to complement rather than compete with what alumni bodies have already been doing. We may also explore the possibility of a more formal alumni benefits programme in future.

To help reach out to our rapidly expanding membership, we will need a more comprehensive network of communication. We intend to contribute more actively to the publication of the Convocation Newsletter and the Convocation website. We shall input more constructive ideas, contribute articles, share contacts and comment on issues of significant impact to our University, alumni and the community. All these will not be possible without your constructive ideas and active participation. It is gratifying to see positive responses to our earlier call for volunteers to join our sub-committees, and we hope to see more in the future.

As the Centenary celebration is drawing near, let us not just sit on our laurels of 100 years of academic excellence. Our University needs you, as Convocation members, to join hands to shoulder the historical responsibility to make our University a better place to learn, our community a better place to live in, and our graduates the future pillars of Hong Kong.

To all of you, may we wish you a Happy New Year!

S Y Choi
Chairman of Convocation