

A Note from the Chairman

When I was called upon to chair a committee to produce this study I knew it would be a daunting task. How do you describe the full impact of such an institution – since its establishment in 1911 Hong Kong's only university for its first 50 years?

As a graduate, each of us has his or her own unique experience with our Alma Mater. Learning that I had been accepted by HKU in the 1960s was tantamount to salvation – it brought the promise of a secure future with middle class income.

Looking back, the first day of university was something of a cultural shock for the freshman. The classes were huge, much bigger than those in the secondary school, but attendance was optional. The lecturer did not follow any one textbook and we were to read from a list. Students had plenty of free time and there were many activities on offer – sports, drama, students' union. Take your pick. This “do as you please” credo was even more evident in the halls of residence – you could get up at any time of the day, or not at all. Yet, whenever there were inter-hall competitions, hall members would spring to action with a sense of unity and “hall spirit”, as we cheered our heroes to victory.

It did not take long for the undergrad to adapt to the new way of life – strolling around the “lily pond” on a spring evening, dozing off in the library, taking part in one of the endless debates of the students' union – three years passed quickly. A second-class honours degree for me signified too much fun and not enough study. Nonetheless, I found enough time to develop a reading habit, though not always from the recommended list.

What did we gain in the three years? The few “First Class Honours” students would go on to become economists and academics. I was happy just to be able to read the *Financial Times*. But then I did become a more mature person, I could express myself better and be more appreciative of other people's point of view. I made many lifelong friends and together as young graduates, we were unashamedly eager to succeed and ready to change the world.

Over the 90 years of its existence, HKU has turned out generations of graduates who would go on to become doctors, lawyers, architects, engineers, administrators, businessmen, teachers and artists, or housewives bringing up children. Whatever their position, whether high and mighty or meek and humble, HKU alumni are known for their dedication to Hong Kong and their pursuit of the truth and excellence. They have all played their part in bringing about Hong Kong's phenomenal social and economic development in the past decades.

Thirty years on, this graduate has the pleasure of sitting together with a group of fellow alumni, young and old. The Impact Study Steering Committee has spent many hours together planning and producing this study. I am very grateful to Committee members for their valuable contribution. I must also thank the Executive Editor, Development & Alumni Affairs Office, the Research Team and the Hong Kong University Press for their efforts.

On behalf of the editorial group, I would like to say that in spite of efforts made, it is impossible to cover all the events and personalities connected with the University over the past 90 years. If this study contains omissions, inaccuracies or misplaced priorities, please be assured that they are unintentional. We have therefore established a web-extension* to complement this book in order to reflect the many more facets and personalities of the University in various fields. The Committee would welcome comments, criticisms, suggestions and any addition of names and data for the benefit of editions in the future. This is the first attempt to chronicle the impact of HKU and can be considered an invitation for more input, information and documents from past graduates so that an improved edition will be produced for the centenary celebration.



Jack Chak-kwong So
Chairman
Steering Committee

* <http://www.hku.hk/alumni/profile>