



It is 11pm. Dark and quiet have descended on the waters of Port Shelter. Yet on the campus perched above it, the lights are on and the air is charged. Students are coming back from the lab, academics are going off to the lab, people are spilling out of the five-level library. Meetings are taking place, plans being made, and social activities starting.

Late as it is, this is the way of HKUST, where life is lived to the full.



Spirit of Adventure

The drive for fresh insights, and teaching them to others, is often hard and long. As one faculty member says: "You research and you research and then you search again." However, the academics at HKUST, all with a doctoral degree and most under 40, are ready. They come from over 35 countries, and 80% are of Chinese descent. The majority earned their doctorates from a cluster of top-flight universities in North America.

"These people are knowledgeable, ambitious, thrusting, and hardworking," says Professor Leroy CHANG, Dean of Science (1993-98) and Vice-President for Academic Affairs (1998-2000). "The whole University has a young, agitated spirit. People are not afraid to change or to argue. If you walk into the University, it is the high-spirited atmosphere you will feel."

Students and young faculty mix with, and are inspired by, senior colleagues who are international greats in their field. Bringing such top people to Hong Kong is one of Professor Shain-Dow KUNG's proudest memories of his six years as Vice-President for Academic Affairs (1992-98).

"My greatest achievement at HKUST is to have helped recruit the four Deans for the four Schools, who are all better than myself," says Professor Kung, a biotechnology expert and himself listed in over 15 different directories of eminent people. "I didn't feel intimidated. If I live on the second floor of an apartment block and I know someone who lives on the 10th floor, it means I can take a look at the view from up there."

No Stereotypes, Please!

With eminent professors and go-getting young faculty, HKUST students have always been set a demanding pace. As founding President Professor Chia-Wei WOO points out: "These days there's no end to learning. Students need to learn how to learn on their own because you cannot afford to be static. What you learn today becomes history tomorrow."

From the outset, the University determined to offer its students the skills and outlook to be at ease in the knowledge economy. Professor Michael LOY, Dean of Science, explains how his School puts the philosophy into action: "Students must be able to choose for themselves if they are going to be creative and make their own judgements, so we try to make our curriculum flexible and encourage them to take courses outside their majors."

Such flexibility is a key factor. Professor Kang L WANG, Dean of Engineering, points out the results for his School: "The engineering education is distinctive in equipping students with creativity and innovative thinking. As Hong Kong moves into a knowledge-based economy, this is becoming ever more important."

To Professor Leroy Chang, the benefits of a broad approach are also clear: "If you are in one field too long, you don't think critically; you become a conformist and work one-dimensionally. If a physics



Four Michael G Gale Medal awardees: (from left) Dr Kam-Ming Yip, Dr Kimberly Chang, Dr Khaled Ben Letaief and Dr Mark Davidson.

student takes biology, all of a sudden new thinking opens up."

At HKUST, all undergraduates take credit-bearing general education courses in the School of Humanities and Social Science. Subjects range from art and music appreciation to history and social studies. There are to be no stereotypes of single-track scientists.

"I hope by taking our courses undergraduates will care about society and learn how to organize their lives," says Professor Pang-Hsin TING, Dean of Humanities and Social Science. "Although work is very important, it's not the only thing in life." In 1997, the School successfully introduced a minor program for those who wanted to learn more about the humanities and social sciences.

One favorite course among undergraduates is, appropriately enough, "The Art of Thinking", taught by

Assistant Professor Dr Kam-Ming YIP. "When I teach students, I always remind myself that we cannot push them to accept what we think is important. What we can do is let them know the reason why we think it is important and let them choose."

In 2000, Dr Yip was awarded the Michael G Gale Medal for Distinguished Teaching, the University's highest accolade for teaching.

Michael G Gale Medal Recipients:

1993-94	Dr Joseph LIAN (Economics)
1994-95	Dr Kin-Yin LI (Mathematics)
1995-96	Dr Mark DAVIDSON (Civil Engineering)
1996-97	Dr Kimberly CHANG (Social Science)
1997-98	Dr Khaled BEN LETAIEF (Electrical & Electronic Engineering)
1998-99	Dr Che-Ting CHAN (Physics)
1999-2000	Dr Kam-Ming YIP (Humanities)

All Abroad

Through the University's exchange programs, students gain a further chance to expand their horizons and reflect more deeply on different aspects of life. With a faculty largely educated overseas and a mission to pursue world-class research, the international perspective has always been strong at HKUST.

Students gain first-hand experience when they go abroad to study at top universities or meet overseas students on campus.

"If I had a choice, everyone would go on exchange programs," says Professor Ping Ko, Dean of Engineering from 1995 to 2000. "You see a dramatic change in students' style of working and what they want to pursue.

"In going abroad, you get to see the people you are competing with, and their attitudes. You have to come out of your shell and learn how things work on the international scene."

Students find exchange programs eye-opening and life-enriching.



Professor Yuk-Shee CHAN, founding Dean of Business and Management, echoes this view. His School started its overseas study scheme in 1996. By 2000, it was operating the largest business school exchange program in Asia. "A semester of living and studying abroad is something totally new for most Hong Kong students," says Professor Chan. "It nurtures their independence, and makes them more mature and self-assured. Students become more comfortable about working in a multicultural environment and, of course, companies in Hong Kong, particularly multinationals, appreciate such exposure."



Prof Ping Ko





New students are given a warm welcome by senior administrators and the Deans at the Official Welcome of New Students.



Students brush up their language skills in the Self-Access Center.



As a teaching assistant, PhD student Tony Tat-Leung Yee teaches while he learns.

In Touch with the World

Operating on an international level means being able to communicate with ease. From day one, the University has made language skills a central focus. English-enhancement courses are available for all students through Professor Gregory JAMES' sophisticated Language Center, which researches and provides customized materials to assist students.

For those with a truly global vision, multimedia tools in the Self-Access Center open the door to more than 20 other languages, from Arabic to Vietnamese.

Make a Difference

So what's it like to start out at HKUST as a fresh undergraduate? "Hard work," recalls Germaine Chore-Man CHAN, second-year accounting major and Students' Union President in 2000.

The course framework, created by the Planning Committee in the late 1980s, was similar to those of the universities in the United States. There would be two semesters a year, a credit structure to allow flexibility, and continuous assessment through frequent quizzes and assignments. The length of a degree was, however, restricted by government funding to three years.



Germaine Chore-Man Chan

"Frankly, if I had entered another university, I might not have wanted to go for the Students' Union presidency. HKUST changed my attitude. When I visited other schools, I thought I would just be able to take from them. When I came here, I felt I could give."

The heavy workload required to complete HKUST's programs soon gave the University a reputation among students as a tough, high-pressure institution.

Tough, but with great potential. For Germaine Chan, it has been a learning curve both in her studies and of a very personal kind.

"If I was telling someone about coming to HKUST, I'd say: you will be busy, very busy, but you can gain a lot," she says. "Unlike other institutions which have been established for a long time, the culture here has not been shaped yet, so you can help define it. Here lies a real challenge — you can come in and establish something new. When you leave, you will have left a mark. Everyone here can make a difference."

Learn and Teach

Tony Tat-Leung YEE has seen both sides of student life, arriving at HKUST in 1994 as a mathematics undergraduate, and going on to do a Master's and PhD at

the University. As a postgraduate he carries out research and serves as a teaching assistant.

"Although it's not easy to suddenly become a teacher, I found I enjoy it and like to hear what the students have to say," Tony Yee says. "Students come to see me in my office to discuss their work and other matters, and I feel pleased that they have become a part of my life.

"I felt it was natural for me to continue my advanced studies at HKUST.

Although this is a local university, it is not localized. Its faculty come from the finest universities in the world. As long as they are available, it is easy for me to keep in touch with the most advanced research topics."

As a full-time postgraduate, Tony lives in a flat on campus, which saves him travelling time and means he can keep his own hours — which usually work out to be noon until 3am. He can eat at any of the campus restaurants, and meet up with friends at the Coffee Shop.



YOUR OWN PERSONAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

How embarrassing ... you finally dare to answer a question in a large lecture hall only to find it is wrong! At HKUST those days are gone. As a world first, the University has developed a novel way to encourage participation in large lectures.

With a pocket-size transmitter for each student and a receiver for the lecturer, Professor Nelson CUE's creation allows questions to be posed and answered privately. Responses are instantly tabulated and displayed on a screen, allowing teacher and students to see whether a particular point has been understood — a teaching tool for the times.



Out and About

A wide-ranging course structure, a multidisciplinary approach, overseas exchanges, language learning — it is a lot to fit in. Yet it is not all work — and the University would not want it any other way. Extra-curricular activities are encouraged and a wide range of facilities provided to enable students make the best of their time out.

Handball players, dragon boat racers, singers, dancers, archers, climbers, martial artists, fitness fanatics — there is room for all at HKUST. Runners can pound the 400-meter waterside track; swimmers can enjoy the use of an Olympic-size outdoor pool or a heated indoor pool for the winter.

There is room for a late-night soccer match and, during the early years, a chance to catch Professor Woo, once a keen basketball player, on court with other staff and students.

Over in the Student Center, there are common rooms and television rooms, meeting rooms and the offices of over 80 different student societies ranging from debating to martial arts to visual arts. If what you seek is not available, there is an easy solution. Use HKUST initiative and set something up yourself.

Take Sean LIN, who was part of the first intake in 1991 and founding President of the Students' Union. He put up a poster, rallied his fellow students and got the Students' Union underway after a



campus-wide vote in 1992. Perhaps it helped that he majored in management.

The Union is one way students can make their views heard. The Big Character Poster Wall is another. Professor Woo says, "As soon as we opened, I said: I want to have such a wall set up so students can have a place to express individual views." Points raised on the Wall often shed additional light on University procedures and have resulted in changes.

Taking Up Residence

Attending university provides a time in people's lives when they can hone their social skills. "University education is a combination of academic and philosophical training, a time when you meet a lot of friends," Professor Ping Ko points out. "You learn from the lectures, and you learn from your friends."

There is no better way to develop those friends than living on campus. With long journeys, often a struggle for space to study at home, and a heavy workload, a room in a student hostel means a great deal to HKUST students.

All undergraduates can spend one semester on campus. However, government limits on funding for campus accommodation means there is a shortage of places. Time in the hostel is thus much shorter than the University would wish, given the benefits to be gained.

While living on campus, undergraduates share a room with a fellow student and learn to look after themselves. They have easy access to all the University facilities and time to mix with other students. They can take part in more activities. It's fun, it's a learning experience, but it is all too short.









Calligrapher Grace Tong at the opening reception of her exhibition in the Library.



Artist-in-Residence Prof Weishan Wu and students in a sculpture workshop.



An open air exhibition by sculptor Ming Ju.

Arts and Science in Harmony

Work, extra-curricular activities, socializing — and culture. At HKUST, the links between the arts and science have been stressed from the moment its iconic sculptured sundial with those soaring curves took up residence on the Piazza in 1991.

To Professor Woo, recognition of the connection between the two is vital for a creative society. "It is not a coincidence that the heartlands of high technology such as San Francisco, New York, London, Paris, Beijing, and Shanghai are also centers of culture."

Fittingly, it was the Library, the intellectual heart of the University, that hosted the University's first exhibition

in 1992. Since then, cultural activities have become an established part of its life. The Center for the Arts brings Artists-in-Residence to the campus, and sponsored close to 100 events in 2000 alone.

Connecting Up

It is certainly a busy and fulfilling life, and though activity on campus is in, splendid isolation is out. For HKUST has knowledge, talent, and drive, and has always sought to add them to the community at large.

The ways and means have been many; the message loud and clear. There is no room for cocooning at Clear Water Bay.

