

Honorary Fellow A Citation

Dr Wong Kwai Lam, B.A., Ph.D

An eminent Hong Kong investment banker with a deep scholarly understanding of the city's historical patterns of trade and finance: this is someone with a most unusual and valuable skill set. If we add to this his conviction that in life, unlike in universities, few 'bosses' at work will genuinely help you, so that one must be self-reliant—while at the same time striving to change this pattern by helping others, especially those younger and less experienced than oneself: then we have an exceptionally wise contributor both to our university and to our wider civic community.

When the young Wong Kwai Lam had finished his Chinese-language middle school and Catholic primary school education, and joined the Chinese University as an undergraduate in 1968, he attended classes as a History major at United College's Bonham Road campus. At that time there were about 12 students in each class and only three Departments in the Faculty of Arts. Hong Kong's few university students were patriots, proud to think of themselves as Chinese.

Kwai Lam's parents had lived a humble life in Guangdong and thereafter Hong Kong. Like all of their generation they believed strongly that education was the best pathway to success; they also believed that the Chinese University was the best pathway to that education. Modestly, however, bearing in mind that very few people at that time were admitted to universities, Kwai Lam felt, not that he had chosen this University, but that it had chosen him. He has remained grateful for this all his life.

As it turned out, the modest young history major turned out to be so good at academic work that he was able to gain admission into a PhD at Leicester University in the United Kingdom, where he worked on patterns of Anglo-Chinese trade and finance in the second half of the 19th century—a farsighted topic for that era. Meanwhile a certain female classmate from his time at United College had chosen to study at another institution in the United Kingdom while Dr Wong was there. Thus he returned from the United Kingdom with not just a PhD but a new bride.

On returning to Hong Kong, Dr Wong found that his historical studies of finance had equipped him well for the finance sector—a useful lesson for those who doubt the practical utility of the humanities. To overcome his lack of practical studies, he soon added to his strong academic achievements a post graduate diploma in Accounting and Finance by evening studies. After a short stint at the Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation he moved into banking. He learned the ropes in corporate finance at Chemical Bank and Standard Chartered Asia Limited, before settling into investment banking at Credit Suisse First Boston (Hong Kong) Limited and then, finally, Merrill Lynch (Asia Pacific) Limited, where he remained for 17 years in many senior positions, notably managing the Asia investment banking division of the firm.

After retiring from Merrill Lynch he became Chairman of IncitAdv Consultants Limited. As an accomplished investment banker with a high reputation he is still much in demand from the headhunters, and holds numerous independent non-executive directorships. Along the way

he has held several advisory positions in which he has been able to help the financial sector as a whole, including as a member of the China Trade Advisory Committee of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, and a member of the Advisory Committee to the Securities and Futures Commission. The arts graduate did not forget the cultural side of community life either, becoming a Director of Opera Hong Kong Limited.

This is not just a story about a successful investment banker, however. Dr Wong never forgot that he had been chosen by this University, nor did he forget his parents' advice about the importance of education. He also remembered that during that long and successful financial career he only had one or two bosses who tried to help him, rather than putting their own careers first.

These beliefs, together with his financial expertise, have led him to his many activities in support of this University and especially of its students. He has been a member of the Board of Trustees of New Asia College since 2005, and the Vice-Chairman of the Board since 2013. He is also a member of the College's General Education Advisory Board, and has sponsored its Mentorship Programme as well as making many other donations to the College, including in support of summer overseas study programmes at Oxford, Cambridge and Berkeley. He has long felt that university students today generally lack adequate speaking and presentation skills in English, and has for many years sponsored an intensive workshop on presentation and communication skills organized by the College open not only to its current students but also recent graduates.

At the University level Dr Wong has taken a close interest in our teaching hospital development. He is a Director of The Chinese University Medical Centre and Hospital Limited and a member of the Taskforce on the Private Teaching Hospital.

Meanwhile, closer to the financial core of his career, Dr Wong has been a staunch supporter of the Institute of Global Economics and Finance, not only through donations, but as a distinguished lecturer in the Executive Leadership Programme in Global Finance. He has also offered lectures within the University's Executive MBA Programme. Thus he has been able to offer just the kind of practical help and advice to young people in his old University that he so often looked for in his own career.

On a more festive note, Dr Wong was a key sponsor of the CUHK 50th Anniversary Kick-off Ceremony · Walkathon and Carnival, in support of the University's 'I · Care Programme'. And finally, he made another generous donation eight years ago, renewed two years ago, to set up an outgoing student exchange scholarship available for the whole University, the Lau Leung Hung Exchange Scholarships, named after his mother, the source of that original drive to receive a university education as the gateway to a career.

For his wise advice and sustained generous support to this University, particularly in the management and development of its teaching hospital, in its financial education and in its student development, all for the sake of Hong Kong, it gives me great pleasure, Mr Chairman, to present to you Dr Wong Kwai Lam for the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the University.