

Head of Shaw College Inaugural Address, 15 February 2008

Joseph Sung

滾滾長江東逝水，浪花淘盡英雄。是非成敗轉頭空：青山依舊在，幾度夕陽紅。
白髮漁樵江渚上，慣看秋月春風。一壺濁酒喜相逢：古今多少事，都付笑談中。

During the calamities of SARS in 2003, I have learned a few things. No strategy is always right. No single person is indispensable. No hero is unbeatable. No success is everlasting. Only through learning from our past experience (good and bad), and pass it on to the next generation, our history can perpetuate. From there on, I resolved to commit to education.

Ever since I graduated from the medical school in 1983, I was assigned to work in the Prince of Wales Hospital, the teaching hospital for the Chinese University. This year, it is my 25th year here. In a quarter of a century, I have seen many changes in Universities. I have seen the University shifts its emphasis from teaching to research. I have seen teachers become more concerned with their research publications and funding than seeing their students grow up and get educated, I have seen students spending hour-after-hour googling and staring at Face-book, instead of going out to the real world to care and share with their families, society and country.

Recently I read a book by Harry R Lewis, the former Dean of Harvard College, entitled "Excellence without a Soul". In the first chapter "Hollow Excellence", he wrote, in Harvard (and I bet in many other Universities) "Professors are hired as scholars and researchers, not as mentors of values and ideals to the young and confused. Instead of expecting professors to help students, universities hire counselors and advisors, and even take pride in absolving faculty of responsibility by touting peer advising systems that use students to do the job professors should do... The relationship of the students to the college is increasingly that of a consumer to a vendor of expensive goods and services. The high purchase price (tuition fees) is justified in the mind of the consumer on the basis of even higher future return." (As a matter of fact, we compare the quality of a University by the average income of their graduates.) "The role of moral education has withered..."

The Chinese University is proud of its collegial heritage. Our College system is unmatched by other Universities in Hong Kong. And I ask myself, what is the uniqueness of Colleges in this University? What makes us different from other Universities? What makes our College system different from a student hostel? What makes Shaw College different from other Colleges? What does it mean when we say "whole-person" education for our students?

In the words of James Bryant Conant, "Education is what is left after all that has been learnt is forgotten". In other words, education is not about (or only about)

imparting knowledge. It is about molding life. It is about helping teenagers to grow up to become mature adults. College, at its best, is where students start to understand themselves and to find ideals and objectives for their lives. College students are of an age where the burden of responsibility shifts- students arrive in a stage of dependency on their parents, and depart to take responsibility for themselves and for society. One of the oldest ideas about a College is that it is a place where children become adults. Especially in residential Colleges, where most students come as their first step out from their parents' home. Here is the place to let them grow.

At the end of 2007, in a survey carried to find out "What is the most important news in Hong Kong?", out of thousands of students interviewed, many named the two Pandas coming to Ocean Park in Hong Kong and the final book of Harry Potter being available in book stores. Whilst this may be important to teen culture it leads me to ponder: Do we know what is going on in the world that we are living in? Do we know how many people are starving or dying from genocide everyday? Do we know how global warming is killing our planet and threatening the life of thousands of species? Do we know how many Hong Kong citizens are living below the poverty line? Do we know how many families are broken and how many elderly people are living helplessly alone? Do we care?

A few months ago, the Financial Secretary of HKSAR Government Mr. John Tsang visited CUHK and gave a speech. He said "CUHK is seen as the opposition party in Hong Kong whereas HKU is seen as the ruling party. HKU is University of Tokyo and CUHK is Waseda University of Hong Kong." I dare to disagree. We are the "opposition party", not necessarily because we are wrong and somebody else is right. We are opposition party because we know what is right yet we are the minority who speak out. The day will come when we become the ruling party and those that are not seeking to answer these fundamental questions become opposition. From the day of the speech, I resolved to put my efforts into building leaders among our students so that one day, you will take the lead to guide Hong Kong, China, the world or wherever you are.

Martin Luther King Jr has a famous "I have a dream" speech. Ladies and gentlemen, I have a dream too... that one day our students and our younger generations will see the need of the poor and the under-privileged as their priority and selflessly offer their help. I have a dream that Shaw graduates will become future leaders of their own fields contributing to well being of mankind. I have a dream that students from CUHK will become fully cognizant that the privileges they have now enjoyed should not be taken for granted. I have a dream that the next generation of Hong Kong will have a vision for a better future as well as of the broad horizon of the present.

These are my dreams and I hope that they will be your dreams too. These dreams could not come true without the unfailing support of our Board of Trustees members. These dreams will not come true unless we have dedicated

teachers and mentors, who will not only be interested in passing the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise), but also interested in helping and supporting young men and women develop the way forward through their teaching and their example. These dreams could not come true without the dedication and commitment of our College staff and officers who work so hard day-and-night for the students of Shaw College. These dreams definitely will not come true without you, my fellow students, who are willing to learn and try new things, to share your tears and laughter with us, and one day after you graduate, to come back to this College to share with your brothers and sisters the fruit and experience of your success. I am here to plead you share my dreams and help make them come true.

Ladies and gentlemen, to finish, I quote Winston Churchill in his May 1940 address to his new administration in United Kingdom preparing for the war, "I have nothing to offer, but blood, toil, tears and sweat". Let us make history together.