



## Open Letter to Staff and Students of The University

Dear colleagues and students:

The remarks made by Prof. Arthur K.C. Li, Secretary for Education and Manpower, on the merger of CUHK and HKUST last Friday (4th October) have triggered very strong responses from various quarters on and off the campus. I feel it my duty to tell you my views and stand on this issue.

To the institutions involved, any merger is a matter of prime importance, which has to be handled with utmost solemnity. I note that our former vice-chancellor, who is now Secretary for Education and Manpower, called himself a 'matchmaker' when talking about the merger. He saw it as a means to help the two universities, in a state of union, to acquire world-class status. He was therefore most enthusiastic, so much so that he even set the earliest and latest possible dates for the 'marriage'. As the chief public officer responsible for education in Hong Kong, he has every reason to push for the realization of something he considers highly desirable for the tertiary education sector. And, as a matchmaker, he went as far as proposing 2005 or 2008 as the year for the marriage to be solemnized. I think we must interpret this as the well-wishes of a zealous matchmaker. But very obviously, the success of any merger will have to be achieved through the free will of CUHK and HKUST. There is a need for the two parties to understand and appreciate each other before any union can be pursued. Just as no timeline can be set for a marriage based on free will, no other party but CUHK and HKUST can decide on the why, how, and when of the merger.

Dear colleagues and students, as vice-chancellor of the University, I feel duty-bound to consider all possible means to enhance the competitiveness of CUHK at the global level. Sure, the University has achieved much over the last 40 years, and is now second to no other university in Hong Kong. But the impact of globalization on higher education is stronger than ever, and the challenges it poses are far greater than the sum total of what was exerted by industrialization and urbanization in the past. Today, with the intensification of globalization in higher education, no university can claim superiority in isolation. Real competition exists only at the global

level, the international level. To be number one in Hong Kong doesn't mean much to our university, or, for that matter, to any other local university. That is why we at The Chinese University of Hong Kong have always aspired to be a university of world-class status.

World-class status can never be achieved by wishful thinking, nor is there any short-cut to it. But I do believe the successful integration or merging of CUHK and HKUST might invigorate both parties to such an extent that their accession to world-class status can be expedited. For a university with a mere 11 years of history behind it, HKUST's remarkable achievements are plain for all to see. We on our part signed an agreement on academic partnership with HKUST as early as 1999, allowing students from both universities to take courses offered by the other party. History also tells us that many of the Chinese University's pioneering institutions have now been widely adopted by other local universities. Examples include the graduate school system, general education programmes, and a flexible credit unit system. The merger or integration of CUHK and HKUST, both being research universities, if achieved through sensible means according to a reasonable schedule, will be mutually complementary and beneficial. I am convinced that a successful merger of the two will resculpt the entire higher education landscape of Hong Kong.

Dear colleagues and students, I personally support the idea of a CUHK-HKUST merger and consider it well worthy of exploring to say the least. I have given this idea a lot of thought, and my views were made known to the University community for the first time in the 4th October issue of the *CUHK Newsletter* (in an interview which I gave some two weeks earlier). I have also exchanged views informally with Prof. Paul Chu, president of HKUST, and we both agree that the merger is a strategy of development worthy of exploration. In his recent letter to the teachers and students of HKUST, President Chu said that it is 'arguable that a merger with CUHK is a possible way to achieve that objective' ('that objective' referring to 'world-class university status'). But of course, no formal agreement or timeline has been reached regarding the merger.

Let me stress that having an idea or an opinion is one thing, but turning that into reality is another. I fully understand that as vice-chancellor, while it is my responsibility to plan the university's future (and that may include the merger), it is not for me to decide on matters of such monumental significance on behalf of the University. The decision of whether the University should or can merge or integrate with HKUST is to be made by the University Council in consultation with the University's teachers, students, and alumni. I belong to The Chinese University, but The Chinese University does not belong to me. It belongs to the CUHKers at the University today, and the CUHKers who have graduated. A matter of such magnitude as the merger should be, and would definitely be, widely discussed and debated throughout the University before a decision is reached, through regular consultative channels. The fact is, to turn an idea to concrete and feasible plans and procedures for its realization is an extremely complex undertaking. What are the benefits? What are the disadvantages? What will we gain? What will we lose? How desirable is the merger? How feasible? If we are merging, how should we merge? What timeline should we follow? All these issues need meticulous research and careful deliberation. That is why I will set up a Special Task Force to explore the desirability and feasibility of a CUHK-HKUST merger as soon as possible.

Dear colleagues and students, I am writing this letter to express my views and position regarding the merger in the most direct way. I hope to see us all discussing and participating in this matter seriously with an eye on mapping the future of the University together.

Thank you all.

Ambrose Y.C. King  
Vice-Chancellor

6th October 2002

## 校長致全校師生信

各位同仁、各位同學：

十月四日教育統籌局局長李國章教授發表有關中大與科大合併的言論，引起了校園內外激烈迴響。我覺得在這個時刻應該跟大家談談我個人對此事的看法與立場。

大學合併的事對任何一間相關的大學來說都是頭等大事，這種事必須以最嚴肅的態度來對待。我清楚注意到本校前校長，現任教育統籌局局長李國章教授在這二校合併的事上是以"媒人"自居的，他認為中大與科大如果能合併的話，大有助二間大學合而成為一間世界級的大學的意向，所以他十分熱心，甚至說出中大與科大"聯姻"的最早與最後的年期。作為主理香港教育的問責局長，他當然有理由希望能完成一件他認為有益於香港高等教育的事，而作為一個"媒人"，他更提出聯姻的2005與2008二個年份。對此，我們應視之為"媒人" "求好心切"的意願。很清楚的，今日今時，兩間大學的合併如要成功，說到底，必須中大與科大通過"自由戀愛"，彼此真正認清對方、欣賞對方，才能走上聯姻之路。"自由戀愛"是沒有先定的時間表的。簡言之，中大與科大二校合併的事，從應否合併？如何合併？到何時合併？等等問題都是完全需由中大與科大自我主導的。

各位同仁，各位同學，作為中大的校長，我覺得我有責任思考一切可能的途徑增強中大在全球競爭中的地位。中大在過去四十年來，誠然已取得了優異的成就。在香港，中大不會次於任何一間大學，但全球化對高等教育的衝擊與挑戰，已大過以往工業化、都市化加起來的影響。今天，高等教育的全球化已越來越深

刻，沒有一個國家、一個城市裡的大學可以劃地自高。今日的高等教育，不講競爭則已，要講競爭，就必須是全球的、世界的。中大，或任何一間香港的大學，在香港稱第一，是沒有太大意義的，這就是為甚麼多年來中大有建造中大為世界級大學的企圖心的道理。

中大要成為世界級大學，不是靠主觀意願就可達到，也沒有任何一條捷徑可走，但我相信中大與科大成功地整合或合併，則極有可能是一條可增快或增強中大（以及科大）成為一間世界級大學的道路。科大建校十一年，成績有目共睹。中大與科大有不少互動，早在1999年已簽訂策略性協議，讓學生互選學分。事實上，中大許多創先的制度，現在也已經為香港其他大學所採用（如研究院制、通識教育、靈活學分制）。中大與科大都是研究型大學，如能通過合理的方式、合理的時間表成功地整合或合併，確有互相增補的效益，確是強強的合作。我相信，中大與科大如能成功地整合，則香港高等教育的景觀將展現一個新的面貌。

各位同仁，各位同學，關於中大與科大整合的想法，我個人是贊成的，至少認為是值得探索的課題。這個構思、這個念頭，我存在已久。十月四日 *CUHK Newsletter* 中，第一次公開表達了我這個想法（這篇訪問稿是二個多星期前寫成的）。我與科大校長朱經武先生也非正式地交換過意見，我們都認為二校合併是一條值得探索的道路，朱校長在最近一封致科大師生信中，也說 "It is arguable that a merger with CUHK is a possible way to achieve that objective"（即達到世界級大學身份）。當然，中大與科大迄今沒有二校合併的協議，更沒有時間表。

我必須強調，有構思、有想法是一件事，如何變成事實是另一件事。我充份了解作為一個校長，有責任去為大學前景（包括二校合併）構思，但沒有權代大學對合併這樣的大事作決定。究竟應不應或能不能與科大合併、整合，這必須要通過大學師生、校友的諮詢討論及最後校董會的決定。我屬於中大，但中大不屬於我個人，中大屬於今天在校的"中大人"，也屬於已畢業的"中大人"。中大與科大合併的頭等大事，絕對應該並且必然會由全校經過廣泛的討論、辯論，經由正常的途徑，才能最後決定。事實上，兩校合併的構思要轉換為可行的具體計劃與步驟，複雜之至。利在何處？弊在那裏？有甚麼得？有甚麼失？合併的可欲性如何？可行性如何？如果合併，又應怎樣的合併？應有怎樣的時間表……這一切都必須有十分周詳的研究與審察。所以，我會盡快地成立一個專責小組展開研究中大與科大兩校合併的可欲性與可行性的工作。

各位同仁，各位同學，我寫這封信，是因為我希望用最直接的方式向各位表達我對中大與科大合併一事的看法與立場。我希望看到的是大家嚴肅地參與討論這件事，共同來決定大學的未來。

謝謝各位。

二零零二年十月六日