



HKU NURTURES RESEARCH CULTURE

Over the past decade, institutions of higher learning in Hong Kong have made tremendous progress in terms of the standard of both faculty and research, according to Professor Anthony Yeh Gar-on, associate dean of the Graduate School of The University of Hong Kong (HKU).

"HKU, for instance, conducts leading-edge research in over 120 academic departments and research centres, and our research output is comparable to the most competitive research universities worldwide," Professor Yeh says. *"We maintain strong links with the industry and community as well. We also provide top-class library and computer facilities for our scholars."*

Evaluating the university by the number of publications per 100 staff, he points out that the university ranks 19th among the top 50 US universities, 5th among the top 10 Canadian universities, 12th among the leading 20 British universities, 3rd among the top 12 Australian universities, and 36th among the world's top 111 universities.

"If these factors are not enough to guide postgraduate researchers in becoming part of the university's intellectually stimulating and varied learning environment, they may note that our students have a good record of employment in academia, government, business and industrial sectors," Professor Yeh says.

The university's teaching and research staff are recruited internationally, he notes, adding that faculty members have won distinguished awards in many international competitions.

The university devotes more than 25 per cent of its resources to research. While the university has the resources and experience in guiding its research scholars, the students themselves have a responsibility to understand and appreciate their role as postgraduate researchers. *"Being a research student is quite a change from being an undergraduate studying for a master degree or studying for a taught master degree. There*

is less hand-holding for research studies. A student must know how to use the library to find out about the latest developments in their research area," he says.

Research work is essentially a creative activity, and attending conferences and seminars can help stimulate new ideas. Students should also learn to examine critically their own and other people's work. *"It is only through critical thinking that new knowledge can be generated. This is very different from a taught degree in which there is less room for critical thinking,"* Professor Yeh says.

Students must also learn to work with their supervisors. *"A successful thesis, the final product of a research student, very much depends on the interaction between the student and the supervisor. Students should not be shy to ask their supervisors critical questions."*

At the outset, research students should work out a timetable with their supervisors and set out some milestones in monitoring and reviewing their progress.

"As there's less course work than in taught degree, it's easy for research students to lose momentum in their studies. It helps to go back to the university every day and work in the library or laboratory, so you can interact with your supervisors, fellow students and department staff. Otherwise, it's very easy to get lost in your studies. The milestones will also help you stay more focused," Professor Yeh says.

Another factor in becoming a successful research student is being able to judge what constitutes high quality academic work.

"If you don't know what high quality academic work is, you cannot produce a high quality thesis. Submitting research papers to top academic journals is good training for research students. It's an acid test on how good your work is," Professor Yeh says.

ACTIVITIES OF PGSA:

1. Singapore High-Tech Trip

PGSA launched an unforgettable Singapore high-tech trip in October 2001. There were 8 PGSA members joining the trip. The activity was collaborated with and assisted by the Singapore Government and the SMC Travel Agency and sponsored by the Graduate School and the OSA.

The participants had a very interesting itinerary as follows:

21 October 2001 (Sun)

Arrival at Singapore

They started with a local tour of Singapore, participants got a first impression of the country and were familiarized with the urban environment. In the evening, they enjoyed a boat trip along the main river and the city centre.

22 October 2001 (Mon)

Visit Institute of High Performance Computing (IHPC) at Science Park and the ST Electronics, Ltd.

IHPC is an applied research institute which performs high-speed computer calculation and simulation. Its services include defense research, medical modeling and industrial simulation.

ST Electronics provides research and development solution in electronic engineering to their government and commercial clients.

2. Boat Trip 2001

The PGSA organized a successful boat trip around Hong Kong marine territory on 28 October 2001.

A total of 200 participants started off from Queen's Pier in Central at 9 a.m. The boat cruised around the western coast of Hong Kong Island.

The boat arrived at Yung Shue Wan of Lamma Island at 10:30 am. Participants shopped happily at the interesting little souvenir shops on both sides of the path leading to Hung Shing Yeh Beach where they strolled along the beach and admired the beautiful scenery.

Lighthouse of Nam Kok Tsui, the most southern point of Hong Kong



The other end of Lamma Island, Sok Kwu Wan, could be clearly seen from Kat Tsai Wan. In front of such picturesque scenery, participants could not help but take photos with one another.



What a picturesque scenery of Lamma Island!

In the evening, all participants visited the Night Safari, which is a unique zoo open to public at night. In fact, all animals inhabiting there are active at night-time and rest in day-time.

23 October 2001 (Tue)

Visit the Bio-processing Technology Centre (BTC), NUS and the Advanced Material Technology (AMT) at Jurong

BTC is owned by the National University of Singapore. It conducts downstream projects to transform lab-bench research to a large-scale production of biological products.

AMT devotes to research and production of delicate materials with complex structure such as hard-disk magnetic head arm or oil rug pump valves.

24 October 2001 (Wed)

Local tour and free time

The participants visited scenic spots and business centres in Singapore, and shopped around the most famous street including Orchard Road.

25 October 2001 (Thur)

Arrival at Hong Kong

All participants were exposed to high tech industrial technology which was crucial to Singapore's economic development. The facilities they visited were not open to the public generally. All participants were grateful for the support of the PGSA, OSA, Graduate School, SMC Travel Agency and the Singapore Government in making the trip a reality.

At noon, they enjoyed their sandwich-lunch on the boat while leaving for Po Toi Island on the south.

Po Toi Island was a special place where most participants had rarely visited because of inconvenient transportation. Guided by an experienced hiker,

Bill Wong, the participants walked along comfortable paths up and down some small hills to the most southern point of Po Toi Island as well as Hong Kong—Nam Kok Tsui. One could view the magnificent panorama of the Pacific Ocean from Nam Kok Tsui. The air was so clean and fresh that simply breathing had become an enjoyment.

It was windy and a lighthouse was standing there proudly showing the boundary of Hong Kong to the approaching ships.

Upon departure at 5:00pm, all participants had a lucky draw and many of them received exciting prizes. They were thankful for the support of the OSA, PGSA and CSSA in organizing and sponsoring the event.