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HKU: An Excellent Place to Nurture World-class Researchers

Many graduate students think that they can only work in Hong Kong or China after getting a degree from our University. However, this is not the case. Prof. WU Fulong, who obtained a PhD degree from our University and worked previously in our University as

a postdoctoral fellow, has recently been appointed as the Chair Professor in the School of City and Regional Planning of Cardiff University, a 5-star programme in the UK. His success is very aspiring and encouraging to our students.



“Regarding my experience, I would say it is an example of ‘globalization’. Hong Kong is Asia’s global city, and HKU is a leading university in the world and the gateway to world-class research. I feel my starting point of career development is HKU. I can say HKU graduates would not have any difficulty in the western research environment because the training in HKU is compatible to the top universities there; from searching references to using software, the facility and supervision of PhD programme is excellent. This is particularly evident in social sciences as Chinese students often need to change their way of conducting social sciences research.” Prof. Wu added that his deepest gratitude went to Prof. Anthony

G.O. Yeh, his PhD supervisor in the Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management, for enlightening him when he first stepped into the western academic world.

Prof. Yeh felt very lucky and honoured to have Prof. Wu to be his first PhD student. Prof. Yeh highly commended his former student for his diligence and analytical mind. “Prof. Wu can set an excellent model for HKU’s research students. I always believe that HKU has a good environment for doing research. It all depends on how the students and staff make the best use of our facilities. In the era of globalization and Internet, hard-working students outside North America, Australia and Europe can also excel in academia. Prof. Wu is a good example.”

May we offer our congratulations to Prof. Wu!

Biography of Prof. WU Fulong

Prof. WU Fulong is a Chair Professor in the School of City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University. He was a Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Reader in the School of Geography at the University of Southampton, UK. He has a PhD degree from the University of Hong Kong, and Master’s and Bachelor’s degrees from Nanjing University, P.R. China. He worked previously in Cardiff University, UK, and the University of Hong Kong as postdoctoral fellow. His research work involves geography of transitional cities and dynamic urban modeling. He has published many papers on urban spatial structure, urban housing and land development in Chinese cities. He is working on the interpretation of China’s new urbanism, urban and regional governance, urban poverty, social spatial differentiation, urban redevelopment, and the calibration of dynamic urban models.

He serves as a member of the editorial advisory board of *Environment and Planning A*, *Environment and Planning B*, *Computer, Environment and Urban Systems*, and *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*. He is a member of the board of directors of Urban China Research Network (UCRN), the coordinator in the working group entitled ‘spatial restructuring, urban planning and politics’ funded by the UCRN, and the coordinator of a British Higher Education Link project with China. In 2001, he received the Otto Koenigsberger Prize from *Habitat International*.

His recent edited book *Globalization and the Chinese City* is to be published by Routledge. He co-edited ‘*Restructuring the Chinese City: Changing Society, Economy and Space*’, Routledge, London (with Laurence Ma) and *GeoDynamics*, CRC press, New York (with Peter Atkinson, Giles Foody, and Steven Darby).

He has guest-edited/ is editing special issues in *Environment and Planning A*, *Urban Geography*, and *Habitat International*. Since 2000 he has been the principal investigator of nine research projects funded by the organizations such as the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust, the Nuffield Foundation, the UCRN and DFID/ the British Council.

ONGOING PROJECTS

- New urban poverty and changing low-income communities under market transition: a case study of the Chinese city (*funded by the British Academy larger grant scheme*)
- The use of GIS and urban dynamic modelling in the simulation of density and pattern of land use (*RGS-IBG/EPSRC Geographical Research Grants*)
- Socio-spatial segregation and neighbourhood change in urban China (*The British Academy*)
- Spatial restructuring, urban planning and politics (*the co-coordinator of the research group, Urban China Research Network [UCRN] USA*)
- The new urban poverty, its distribution and alleviation measures in China’s transition towards a market oriented economy (*the British co-coordinator, DFID / British Council*)



Croucher Foundation & Butterfield-Croucher Awards

Miss TANG Hoi Ching, Eva *PhD student, Department of Pharmacology*

Eva was awarded the Croucher Foundation Scholarship for the tenure of her PhD studies. On top, she received the Butterfield-Croucher Studentship, for the best local candidate in biological and medical sciences category this year. The total of the two awards adds up to US\$20,500 for the tenure of her study.

"I am so grateful for the awards. I felt so excited that my research work was recognized by the selection committee of the prestigious Croucher Foundation." Eva said her achievements were much attributed to her supervisors, Prof. Paul Vanhoutte and Prof. Ricky Man. She described Prof. Vanhoutte as "An extraordinary person, a faultless mentor, a real master. A real master creates masters not followers. The real master throws you back to yourself. And he is exactly doing that. His whole effort is to make you independent of him, as dependence will not lead you anywhere. A false master persuades you to follow him, to imitate him, to be just a carbon copy of him. The real master will not allow you to be a carbon copy; he wants you to be the original and you need to be original to generate new findings". Another philosophy that he has taught her, which she finds extremely important in research and life, is to have an open mind. Accept the absurdity, but carry doubts with it. She also finds her co-supervisor Prof. Man a continuous source of inspiration. "He constantly reminds me how fortunate we are to be research students. As postgraduate studies allow us to be inventive and not repetitive."

The focus of Eva's research is to study endothelium-dependent contracting factors (EDCF) in the model of hypertension. Endothelial cells control the tone of the underlying vascular smooth muscle by releasing vasoactive substances. Whereas endothelium-derived relaxing factors (EDRF) in particular nitric oxide (NO) have received considerable attention, much less is known about the ability of the endothelial cells to release EDCF.

She aims to define the precise sequence of events in the endothelium-dependent contraction cascade and the molecular events of EDCF inhibition that takes place within endothelial cells. It is hoped that the research will permit a better understanding of the exact nature of EDCF and therefore enable the design of potential therapeutic drugs in the future to correct the imbalance of vasoactive substances, which accompanies vascular disease.

"Gaining the awards not only brings me great honor and gratification, but it has reassured me that I am passionate about research. Research is much like a beautiful journey; it is a process of constant learning and exploring. It generates excitement every moment, because every moment you are opening a new door, every moment you are coming in contact with a new mystery. If you look deeply into your answer, you will see a thousand and one questions arising out of it," said Eva.



Li Po Chun Postgraduate Scholarships 2004/05

Mr. KONG Pak Hin, Anthony *PhD student, Faculty of Education-Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences*

Anthony was awarded the Li Po Chun Postgraduate Scholarships 2004-05. His research project focuses on developing a quantitative system for analyzing Cantonese narrative speech in aphasic speakers. Aphasia refers to the difficulties in producing and understanding language that one suffers due to brain injuries. Given that relatively little research has been done in Cantonese aphasia, as compared with the corresponding English literature, there are only limited tools available for assessing Cantonese-speaking aphasic patients. The product of Anthony's project will be valuable for both research purposes and practical usage. It will allow contrast of speech characteristics among different types of Cantonese aphasic patients. In addition, local speech therapists will be able to use the tool to objectively diagnose and monitor the change of their patients.



Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund Fellowship 2004/05 (for Postgraduate Research Students)

Nine students were granted the “Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund Fellowship” (for Postgraduate Research Students) in 2004/2005:

Miss CHAN Lai Fung (*PhD/ Chemistry*)

Mr. HON Chung Chau (*PhD/ Zoology*)

Miss KEUNG Wen Yee, Wendy (*PhD/ Pharmacology*)

Miss KWONG Yee Lan, Elaine (*MPhil/ Education*)

Mr. LAM Ho Cheong (*PhD/ Education*)

Mr. LAW Hiu Fai (*MPhil/ Mathematics*)

Miss LEE Yuk Kwan, Mary (*PhD/ Pharmacology*)

Miss WONG Ka Yan (*MPhil/ Computer Science*)

Mr. YEUNG Kai Ho (*PhD/ Electrical and Electronic Engineering*)

Two of them would like to share with us about their research.

Mr. LAM Ho Cheong *PhD student, Faculty of Education*

“At a younger age, like many ambitious fresh graduates, I had in mind only the idea of pursuing postgraduate study abroad at those so-called top-notch universities overseas. But now I hold a different view on this, and start to question: if all the better students leave for the internationally prestigious universities, what will happen to the development of the local research postgraduate education in Hong Kong?”

In 2003, I started to work on my PhD in Education. More specifically, I study how children’s learning of the thousands of Chinese characters can be effectively enhanced. To give you a taste of my work, children learning a new character, say 怒, may actually have different ways of seeing the character: (i) as a whole unit 怒; (ii) as three unrelated components 女, 口 and 心 and (iii) as two meaningful constituent parts 如 (phonetic radical) and 心 (semantic radical).

I put forward that children who are aware of the relationship between the meaningful parts and the whole characters can learn the characters better. My work lends further support to the effectiveness of systematically arranged use of contrastive character pair in bringing about a more meaningful understanding of the characters.

Because of this work, I have recently been awarded the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund Fellowship. The aim of the Fund is to encourage people of Hong Kong to pursue postgraduate studies by research. I am very much heartened by this endorsement of my work. I am reassured that I am happy to have chosen to do academic research as a life long career. My PhD study at this university definitely gives me a precious space to conceive ideas for what to do in the years to come after graduation. Hopefully, my effort can lead to intellectual contribution to the community at large.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Fund Council? My heartfelt thanks also go to my supervisor Prof. Amy B.M. Tsui for her many constructive critique and insightful suggestions. From her, I learn the rigor of good research. I am also deeply indebted to Mr. Wing-wah Ki, who has offered me numerous opportunities to develop myself in both career and study over the years. Moreover, I am grateful to the Office of Research, Faculty of Education, especially Prof. Colin Evers and Ms. Norris Liu, for their nomination of my application for the award.

I was born and brought up in Hong Kong, and I identify myself with this place. If I have to say a few words to our fellow undergraduate and research students, I will invite them to grow and learn together with the universities in Hong Kong in moving towards world-class standing.”



Miss LEE Yuk Kwan, Mary *PhD student, Department of Pharmacology*

Research Plan of Ms. Lee’s project:

The most important aspect of endothelial dysfunction as induced by aging or injury is the lesser release or bioavailability of NO, which probably is the fundamental, initial step of the atherosclerotic process. It subsequently permits the local inflammatory response and initiates the characteristic morphological changes in atherosclerosis. My research objective is to understand the phenotypic changes in endothelial regeneration after coronary endothelial denudation by percutaneous coronary intervention in pig. Twenty-eight days after the operation, porcine coronary arterial endothelial cells (EC) will be cultured by gently scraping the cells from the left anterior descending arteries. The endothelial function will be compared by measuring the release of cyclic GMP in the cultured regenerated ECs and the native ECs by radioimmunoassay. In addition, the differential gene expression in the regenerated ECs will be probed by the GeneChip® microarray which consists of 23,256 transcripts from *S. scrofa* genes. From the microarray data, we hope to explain the phenotypic alterations that underlie the endothelial dysfunction which ultimately leads to the pathogenesis of the atherosclerotic diseases.



HKU Libraries: Another Home for Students

The Libraries have been renowned for their vast resources and useful services. Ms. Phyllis Chau (Part-time MSSc in Counselling) shared her research experience with Antonia, Librarian. Antonia first met Phyllis early this year in February when Phyllis was gathering momentum for her thesis, and made an appointment for the Research Consultation Service. Below is an interview between **Phyllis (P)** and **Antonia (A)**.

A: Phyllis, how did you learn of the Research Consultation Service offered by the library?

P: I was seeking assistance at the Reference Counter in the Main Library one day. And, given the unique nature of my enquiry, the Librarian on duty recommended that I could make an appointment for the Research Consultation Service. So, I explored further on this service from the Libraries website and made an appointment by filling in the online request form.

A: So, how did you find this service?

P: I think this service has been very useful, tailor-made to my information needs. I was able to get a more structured and focused approach in finding information, especially on the measurement tools for data collection. Having gone through the session on research consultation, I find myself more confident in finding information and conducting research independently. Acquiring such library skills is especially crucial for one embarking upon a postgraduate programme.

A: Besides this Research Consultation Session, where else did you pick up these library skills?

P: I remember when I first started my Master's programme, my seniors advised me to attend the Postgraduate Library Workshops which they found very useful. The workshop provided me with an overview of the services and library skills. So, coupled with the personalised Research Consultation Service, I am able to seek and focus on the necessary information I need. I find it a joy to learn and to expand one's knowledge with the vast resources available from the library.

A: Do you find such library skills useful at your workplace?

P: Definitely. The field that I am working in is very dynamic. The culture and social environment change very quickly. So, there is an urge for me to keep myself up-to-date in order to provide the best service to my clients.

A: What would you miss most about the library when you graduate from this University?

P: I have spent most of my time in the library over the past two years. So, I guess it would be my Library Card. (Phyllis, in fact, was holding an application form for the Libraries Circle of Friends.) The library offers me access to a lot of resources, many of which are available online making access so efficient and convenient. From a student's viewpoint, the resources have given me a lot of support to my study and learning. From a social worker's viewpoint, such resources have helped me to keep abreast of my professional knowledge. Deeper down at my personal level, I have gained more self-understanding through the research process.

A: I am glad to learn that you are able to extend these library skills to your profession and daily life. Before closing off this conversation, do you have any word of advice to our new students?

P: Regularly refreshing one's knowledge will keep one young and energetic. We can often achieve this by actively taking the initiative to explore the resources available to us. These resources, of course, include the library. I hope I will have the chance to continue further with my studies in the future, although studying part-time is no doubt a very difficult task. But, I think it is very worthwhile.

Find out more about the Library Services for Postgraduates
<http://lib.hku.hk/userinfo/hkupg.html>

To join the Libraries Circle of Friends after your graduation
<http://lib.hku.hk/friends/application.pdf>



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