

**Speech by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, at HKU
Centenary Gala Dinner on December 18, 2011**

Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of Council, Colleagues, Students, Alumni and Friends,

Tonight we are here at this Gala dinner to celebrate the University's Centenary, because HKU was formally established 100 years ago.

The University Anthem you heard earlier was composed in 1912, sung in Latin but abandoned after the War; it has now been pieced together and revived again; it has indeed brought us back to history long forgotten.

The torch of wisdom and virtues has gone through many hands.

This university grew from its first congregation of 23 graduates to the recent 185th congregation of over 7,400.

So has Hong Kong, for which the university was dedicated; it has transformed from a fishing village of a century ago, to "Asia's World City" of today.

Indeed, the birth of this first and foremost University was an important part of the history of Hong Kong and China. The establishment of the University came about through the combined efforts of two men, Frederick Lugard, Governor of Hong Kong and a Parsee merchant named Hormusjee Navrojee Mody who had been resident in Hong Kong for 50 years – They represent a perfect example of East meets West.

Lugard made a speech at a secondary school, called St. Stephen's College, supporting the idea of a university for Hong Kong on January 17, 1908 prompting Mody to offer a sum of \$150,000 to erect the first university buildings. Mody took up the challenge, and came up with the money almost immediately. Lugard offered a site at the junction of Bonham and Pokfulam Roads.

The construction of HKU's Main Building started in 1910 with the laying of the Foundation Stone on March 16, and, the University was formally founded in 1911.

Note that Lugard did not come up with the money. All the money came from the people in Hong Kong, in China (including the Viceroy of Guangdong, or Canton, as it was called in the Qing Dynasty), from people in South-east Asia and, from companies back in England. It could have been an impossible dream, were it not for those who believed in the need for a university in Hong Kong, and the generosity of those who wished to see one built for Hong Kong, China and the world.

Today, the university is celebrating its Centenary, re-affirming its missions in the simple words of Knowledge – Heritage – Service.

HKU leads with Knowledge, represented by generations of scholars and students in their relentless quest for truth. Indeed, universities are the soul of society, and they represent hope.

HKU has always been an international hub for intellectuals. One hundred years ago, almost all the teachers were expatriates and two-thirds of the students were non-Chinese. We have retained this international outlook till this day, making us the unusual test case of being the most international institution within a Chinese community on Chinese soil.

As China moves forward, HKU must assume the responsibility to play an even bigger role at a higher level. HKU must see and establish itself as a key institution in China.

We have a responsibility to further bridge China and the World; ensure that East and West working together, over and above all controversies and confrontations. We are privileged, at this juncture of history, to contribute to the Asia Century and world dynamics.

HKU leads with its culture, tradition and heritage, with its hallmark of freedom, liberty and diversity.

Universities are the conscience of society. We debate. We argue. We speak our minds. There are often times no right or wrong but we are always rigorous and robust when dealing with controversies. At the end, we lead in groundbreaking research to benefit humankind, and we lead in moral high ground that makes history.

Dr Sun Yat-sen was the first student of the Hong Kong College of Medicine, which was later incorporated as part of HKU. When he started a revolution, we have a new country. So, this is the kind of capability and courage our graduates and alumni have.

As a matter of fact, many young HKU alumni have already made their mark in fighting to eradicate poverty, promote equality, and ensure sustainability. And, even current HKU students have been touching the lives of others in their unique ways. For example, some have started their own NGOs and charities, and others, innovative social enterprises, all devoting themselves with passion, selflessness and purity of purpose. We admire these young people in their determination to build a better tomorrow, for all of us.

So that HKU can continue to lead with Service.

And, at this time, I should take the opportunity to acknowledge all the HKU staff, alumni, students, benefactors and friends who have contributed to the success of the University in the past 100 years, and, in organizing the various events of our Centenary Celebrations so far, over the entire year, particularly in organizing tonight's Gala dinner. Let's put our hands together to show our heartfelt appreciations of their service.

Sincere gratitude also goes to our international partners who have travelled from afar to join us.

In fact, earlier today, over 70 presidents and heads of our partnering universities and distinguished institutions from around the world gathered in a Presidents Summit held at the University. We shared views on how universities and higher education in the 21st century could further enhance our missions in knowledge discovery, education of young people, global sustainable development, contribution to humanities, and making a difference to humankind.

We also explored how we could take advantage of our East-West connection and tackle some of the challenges that universities around the world are facing in this constantly changing and often uncertain environment.

As HKU is moving into its second century, I know that we are all committed to joining hands and cooperate with each other, to make the world a better

place for all of us.

And, as we celebrate, we should not forget those who have helped us along the way – the Governments, our benefactors, our partnering universities, and the Hong Kong community at large, for making this dream of a university possible and for their relentless support over the last 100 years. So we celebrate, with a deep sense of gratitude and hope.

Now please allow me to say a few words in Cantonese, the local dialect, because many Hong Kong people are watching us via the webcast:

在今晚這一個歷史性的時刻，我要代表所有港大的師生、校友向香港社會大眾說一句多謝。多謝！

感謝大家過去一直不斷的支持，令大學的科研以及教育理想可以實現。今晚我們是懷著無限感恩心情在這裡慶祝百年校慶。

香港大學立足香港、放眼世界、貢獻國家；我相信每一位港大人都會繼續致力服務社會，建立仁愛、公義、更美好的明天。

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the HKU Family, let's join hands, put our heads together, learn from the past, build a better future and write a new chapter in history, for Hong Kong, for China and for the entire world.

Thank you very much.