

Message from Dr C H Leong

An open letter to members of HKU family

Dear students, teachers and alumni,

I am writing to you in my capacity both as an alumnus of the University, and also as the Chairman of the Council. As an alumnus, I share the frustration of some of you on what is happening in my *alma mater* recently. Like you, I share the concern that the issues relating to the appointment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor have upset many of us and the public. Like you, I too wish that a decision could be made as quickly as possible, so that the University can move ahead to make HKU an eminent international University.

As the Chairman of Council, I would like to emphasize that whatever I do, it is done with the best interest of the University at heart.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain:

- the background of the establishment of the position of Vice-President & Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Staffing and Resources), and the role and responsibilities of this VP & PVC
- the process and procedure for selecting a senior member of the management team
- the decisions made by the Council at its meeting in June, and the implications of the decisions

Background

The VP & PVC (Academic Staffing and Resources) post is mainly a reestablishment of a former post of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Staffing) which has been left vacant for some 5 years since the then PVC concerned left the University. As the then Vice-Chancellor felt at that time that with the establishment of a new Executive Vice-President position, the workload of the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor would be lighter, the University therefore might not need a PVC (Staffing).

The Human Resources Policy Committee (HRPC) which is a standing committee of the Council at its meeting in September 2013 recommended the establishment, from the old PVC (Staffing) post, of a post which the HRPC once referred to as an "Associate Provost" at an earlier meeting in June 2013. In making its recommendation in September 2013, it was proposed in the HRPC paper that the DVC would decide on the exact portfolio of the proposed new PVC. The recommendation of HRPC was accepted by Council in January 2014, noting that there would be a change to the name of the post and "a revised portfolio to assist the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in the areas relating to academic staff". (Relevant Minutes of Council meeting on January

28, 2014 refer). (The name of the post was changed to VP & PVC (Academic Staffing and Resources) in June 2014.)

The process and procedure for selection of a senior member of the management team

All Pro-Vice-Chancellors are selected by a Search Committee headed by the President & Vice-Chancellor with other members appointed by the Council. The search exercise is a global one, normally with the assistance of a “head hunting” firm.

When the Search Committee has completed its job, it would make a recommendation to the Council which is the appointing body. The recommendation could be a candidate of choice, or there could be no recommendation at all in the case of a failed search.

The Chairman of the Council has no role whatsoever in the work of the Search Committee.

Council meeting on June 30

When I was informed that the Search Committee was ready to present its recommendation, I placed the recommendation as a specific item on the agenda for the June Council meeting. Following the normal practice, the agenda item was circulated to Council members under “strictly confidential” cover around a week before the Council meeting. For confidentiality reason and following the agreed practice, the Search Committee paper was not circulated, but members were informed that it would be tabled at the meeting. The content of the Search Committee report therefore was not revealed before the meeting.

A few days before the Council meeting, I received requests from several Council members to either withdraw the agenda item or to defer the discussion until the views of the new Provost & DVC have been sought.

I did not remove that item from the agenda. A formal resolution to defer the discussion of that item was proposed and seconded at the meeting before that item was brought up for discussion. Having taken legal advice, I allowed the “deferment” resolution to be discussed. It was thoroughly debated and voted on at the meeting. The decision was to support the “deferment”. The agenda item of the Search Committee’s report was therefore not discussed but put in abeyance.

It should be noted that the Council heard at the meeting from the President & VC that it was possible that a new Provost & DVC could be appointed in August the earliest. The Council’s decision therefore was made after taking into consideration of the portfolio of the VP & PVC (Academic Staffing and Resources), and the fact that a new Provost & DVC might be appointed as early as August this year.

It is also important to note, in this connection, that the Council works on the principle of corporate governance *i.e.* by collective decision and responsibility.

The implication of the deferment

Unlike some would like to believe, the decision on June 30 was not to disestablish the post, nor to discard the recommendation of the Search Committee, but to put the item in abeyance until the views of a new Provost & DVC is sought.

When Council members were invited to vote on the issue, I made it clear and stated categorically from the chair that views and comments should be sought from the Provost & DVC-designated when the appointment is made, and not to wait until the person has taken up the position.

The decision of Council Meeting of July 28, 2015

Since the June Council Meeting, I have had a cordial discussion with a group of 13 alumni, and received letters and signatures from other alumni and the concerned public. I have decided to report these concerns to the Council, and a relevant item has been placed on the agenda for the July meeting. After the issue of the meeting agenda, I have received a request from some Council members to revisit the decision on “deferment” made on June 30.

I am prepared to give permission for members to revisit the decision. I will bring the proposal for discussion by the Council at its meeting to be held tomorrow.

My position

I would like to reiterate here that as an HKU alumnus, I am very concerned that the University should be allowed to move on as quickly as possible. Yet as the Chairman of the University Council, I have to abide by the rules and regulations governing the procedures and decision-makings at Council meetings. I would continue to do my best to steer the deliberations of Council members with a view to making decisions that are always in the best interest of the University, and as trustees of the University. I hope, and I believe, that Council members will indeed do so.

Dr C H Leong

July 27, 2015

梁智鴻醫生致香港大學成員的公開信

各位港大成員：

今天我以港大校友，以及港大校務委員會主席的身份與大家分享我對最近一些事件的看法。身為校友，我深深明白大家近來對委任副校長（學術人力資源）一事所表達的關心和焦慮，尤其當此事已引起大學成員以至大眾間廣泛的討論。我跟你們一樣，希望可以早日就事件作出決定，讓大學得以繼續邁步向前，致力成為國際上首屈一指的大學。

作為校委會主席，我要一再重申，我所做的一切，皆以大學最佳利益為依歸。

我想藉此機會向大家解釋下列幾點：

- 設立副校長（學術人力資源）一職的背景，其職能和職責
- 物色大學高層管理人員的既定程序
- 校委會在 6 月會議上的決定及其含義

背景

副校長（學術人力資源）一職乃重設前副校長（人力資源）五年多前離任後所懸空的職位。當時的校長認為，設立了行政副校長一職後，可減輕首席副校長的工作，因此或無需填補副校長（人力資源）一職。

校委會屬下的人力資源政策委員會於 2013 年 9 月的會議，在審視大學管理層情況下，認為需重設於同年 6 月會議中提出的「副校長」一職協助首席副校長，並提交文件建議其具體職務範圍需由首席副校長決定。校委會在 2014 年 1 月接納建議，亦留意到該職位將更改職銜，以及「更新職務範圍以協助首席副校長處理學術事宜」。[詳見 2014 年 1 月 28 日校委會會議記錄。另，該職位的職銜於 2014 年 6 月改為副校長（學術人力資源）]

物色大學高層管理人員的既定程序

所有副校長皆透過以校長為首、由校委會委任大學成員組成的物色委員會物色推薦。該委員會通常在獵頭公司協助下，開展全球性的物色工作。

當物色委員會完成工作後，便會向作為任命機構的校委會提交建議，而該建議可以是推薦一適合人選，有時甚至人選欠奉。

校委會主席沒有參與物色委員會的任何工作。

校委會會議（2015年6月30日）

當我得知物色委員會擬於6月的校委會會議上提交建議時，我把該建議列入會議議程。按慣例，議程項目在會議舉行一星期前左右會以“嚴格保密”封發送給各校委會成員。基於保密理由，物色委員會的文件並沒隨封發送，而只供在會上閱覽。因此在會議前並沒透露任何有關物色委員會的報告內容。

在會議舉行前幾天，有數名校委會成員要求我撤回議題或延後議決，直至大學已覓得新任首席副校長並能聽取其意見為止。

我並沒有從議程中刪除該議題。在會議中，有成員動議延後議決，得到和議。在徵求法律意見後，我同意討論「延後議決」這決議，接著我們就此進行深入的辯論、審議以及表決，最後作出「延後」的決定。因此，校委會暫時擱置審議物色委員會報告這項議程。

值得一提的是，校委會在會議上從校長口中得知有機會最早於今年8月委任首席副校長一職。因此校委會是根據此情況並考慮副校長（學術人力資源）一職的具體職務範圍後，作出「延後議決」的決定。

我想強調，校委會在討論、審議工作上均依從校委會規程行事，緊守集體決策和負責的原則。

延後的含意

6月30日的決議並非如一些人士所想的：它不是解除該職位，亦不是摒棄物色委員會的推薦，而是把有關項目暫時擱置，以待徵求新任首席副校長的看法和意見。

當校委會成員獲邀就事件投票時，我立即以主席的身份表明，在首席副校長人選落實後，便可徵求該候任人的看法和意見，而不須等待其正式上任。

有關 2015 年 7 月 28 日校委會的決定

自 6 月份的校委會會議後，我與一行 13 名校友真誠交流，並收到其他校友及表達關注人士的信件及簽名。我決定在校委會報告其關注，並於 7 月份會議上加入一項相關的議程。在發出議程後，我收到一些校委會成員要求重新審議 6 月 30 日作出有關「延後」的決定。我已準備批准委員們重新審議有關決定，並會在明天舉行的校委會會議上提出討論。

本人的立場

作為香港大學校友，我重申我非常希望大學可盡快向前邁進；然而作為校委會主席，我必須緊守管理校委會會議程序及決議的規則和規定。我將繼續竭盡所能，帶領作為大學受托人的校委會成員去審議事件，並作出對大學最有利的決定。我希望，亦相信，校委員成員定當同心協力，為大學謀福祉。

梁智鴻醫生

2015 年 7 月 27 日