

This is my fourth and final end-of-year message, and is based on my recent speech to the University Court. I begin by repeating my main message, which is a sincere thank you to all the students, staff, alumni and friends of the University of Hong Kong who do so much to maintain and further develop the University's status: all your hard work is very much appreciated. Thank you for the enormous number of written and/or spoken messages of support that I have received during my time here and since my decision to leave. Above all, thank you for the honour and the privilege of having led your University for almost four years.

In order to assess the state of the University and set the scene for my successor, I will discuss some aspects of the University as it was in late 2013 when I was appointed and in early 2014 when I started the job, and then provide you with my analysis of the situation in late 2017 and early 2018 when I will leave the University.

One headline, illustrated in the attached slides, is that when I arrived, HKU was falling in all three of the world's major international league tables and as I leave, we are rising. Let me reiterate my often-stated attitude to rankings and league tables: we must never set policy or strategy to satisfy any particular ranking's criteria, but if we do the right things, and focus on excellence in all that we do, improved rankings will surely follow. This is proving to be correct.

My observation when I first studied and thought about the University of Hong Kong was that it needed strong and principled leadership in order to modernise and also to navigate some stormy waters that were expected in 2014 and thereafter. Effective leadership is about vision, determination and principles. It is about being prepared to take difficult decisions even if they risk causing personal unpopularity and about always focusing on the best interests of the institution as a whole rather than those of yourself or any other individual. I will give you a few examples.

When I arrived, the Dental Faculty was a very unhappy place with a culture of allegation and counter-allegation being made between staff members, often via widely circulated e-mails. A new Dean arrived in 2014 and he was forced to spend a very substantial proportion of his time investigating and managing these various allegations. With some strong leadership from me and from Professor Flemmig, we addressed this poisonous culture and took steps to end it. I am pleased to say that things rapidly improved and the working atmosphere of the Faculty, and importantly therefore the Dean's ability to get on with the job rather than be distracted by constant fire-fighting, have been very much better ever since. Unfortunately, the other major issue facing the Dental Faculty, namely the difficulties in reaching agreement with the Food and Health Bureau about the optimal use of the Prince Philip Dental Hospital, remains unresolved and we have been forced to consider other options for the provision of facilities for the postgraduate programmes which are an essential part of the education of dental specialists. Happily, despite this the Dental Faculty has been ranked number 1 in the world for the last two years and we are very proud of that. However, as I have repeatedly stated, particularly in Council meetings but also publicly, I am very concerned that it will be difficult for the Faculty to maintain this pre-eminent position if it cannot expand and develop its postgraduate programmes. I am disappointed that whilst the government and others have been quick to join the celebrations of

the Faculty's number 1 ranking, they have not been so quick to help us to secure our postgraduate programmes, apparently seeing them as money-earners for the University instead of as vital contributors to the education and specialist training of a modern dental workforce for Hong Kong and an essential part of being an internationally credible Dental School of which Hong Kong can be rightly proud.

When I arrived, and in fact even before I arrived, the HKU- Shenzhen Hospital was always described to me as a problem, possibly the biggest problem that I would face as the incoming President. I never saw it that way: I always saw it as an opportunity. I recognised that the teaching and research potential of having a hospital just across the border in the exciting and rapidly developing metropolis of Shenzhen could, if managed properly, bring unprecedented advantages to HKU. However, because the reasons why the University should participate in this project had never been properly articulated, the financial basis for the agreement had never been clearly defined and the governance of the agreement was opaque to say the least, the situation was characterized by many in Hong Kong as posing extreme reputational and financial risk to the University. Fortunately, my own background in medicine and my experience in joint working between a university and a healthcare system in my previous job in the UK equipped me well to understand the problems. With wonderful help from Ms Isabella Wong and others, I established a very good relationship with Mayor Wu and colleagues in the Shenzhen government, who always had a very positive and enthusiastic attitude to the project, and I worked successfully with them to enhance our mutual understanding. Although the HKU-Shenzhen Hospital took up a disproportionate amount of my time in my early years here, I am delighted that now the discourse about the Hospital has radically changed. Everyone talks about it as a success and an opportunity. One saying about leadership is that when something goes well, there will be plenty of others wishing to share the credit for it, but when things go badly, everyone will be very happy to allow you to take the full responsibility. In the case of the HKU-Shenzhen Hospital, there are many others that deserve their share of the credit for the turnaround in perceptions, but I am proud of the part that I have played. Our medical, nursing, Chinese Medicine and other students now benefit from the teaching opportunities there; our researchers have access to unique patient populations and research materials and are starting to obtain major Mainland research grant funding; and the Hospital has attracted international admiration. The original explanation that I was given for the University's participation, namely that we would contribute to healthcare reform in Mainland China, has also started to come true: other public hospitals have copied our methods including abolishing out-patient intravenous therapies, utilising booking systems for out-patient appointments, aiming to shorten the length of hospital stays and minimise the use of antibiotics to name just a few. Lengthy and complex negotiations with the Shenzhen authorities have tackled the financial issues and the Hospital has now agreed a detailed repayment schedule for the staffing and other costs incurred by the University in supporting the project. Even some of the complicated taxation issues have been satisfactorily addressed. I am very confident that the HKU-Shenzhen Hospital can be described to my successor as an asset, not as a problem as it was described to me in 2013/14.

Some of the senior academic staff reporting structures were dysfunctional when I arrived. The Chair Professors supposedly reported directly to the President, but their numbers are such that

no effective reporting was possible. Even worse, this arrangement by-passed the Deans and put them in a very difficult situation. Whilst most Chair Professors were and are highly responsible, soon after I arrived, one senior professor tried to hold the University to ransom over a particular issue. Strong leadership was needed to deal with that situation and then to abolish the inadequate reporting structure that underlay it. I also wanted to further empower the Deans: having been a Dean for 6 years myself, I recognised that Deans are in a challenging position. Deans at HKU previously had to be unduly concerned about their popularity within their Faculty, but as I said earlier, an effective leader will not always be a universally popular one so we changed the reporting structure such that the Senior Management Team (SMT) took primary responsibility for the appointment and appraisal of the Deans, their renewal decisions etc., and the Deans all reported to the Provost. The Deans were clearly designated as the principal budget holders in the organisation. It is generally acknowledged that this change has clarified the role and responsibilities of the Deans.

These are operational details but these changes have made the University a more transparent and modern organization. At a strategic level, we developed, after wide and lengthy consultation, our ten year vision entitled “Asia’s Global University” and comprising the 3+1 Is: internationalisation, innovation and interdisciplinarity, all converging on the fourth I, Impact. This slogan has seemed to chime with many people locally and internationally: numerous external parties have complimented us on the plan; some universities in Hong Kong and abroad have copied elements of it (they do say that imitation is the most sincere form of flattery!). On Internationalisation, we have made progress on the two elements, internationalisation at home and the universal provision of opportunities for experiences outside Hong Kong. When I arrived, there were allegations that HKU had become largely invisible in the two major international alliances of which we are a member, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities and Universitas 21. I have made strenuous efforts to be more engaged in these alliances, including being made a member of the Executive Committee of Universitas 21 in 2015. I have been a regular speaker at the annual Presidents’ meetings of both alliances and other SMT colleagues have also actively contributed to meetings of the alliances in Hong Kong and elsewhere. The University was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos for the first time ever in 2016, where I spoke on three panels, and I was invited to contribute again in the 2017 Davos Forum: this is unprecedented evidence of our enhanced international recognition.

At home, we continue to develop an ever-more global curriculum, plus encouraging incoming international students and staff (with the latest superb addition to the diversity of our student body being the HeForShe scholars, who I will say more about later, and the latest additions to the staff including a fantastic group of mid-career humanities scholars in the Faculty of Arts’ “Society of Fellows” scheme and also the Asia Global Institute’s Asia Global Fellows) plus distinguished visiting professors from all over the world, numerous international conferences and internationally-themed events etc. We are already one of the world’s most international universities but we are actively becoming even more international. Regarding opportunities outside Hong Kong, we set ourselves the ambitious target of 100% of our undergraduates having two opportunities, one in the Mainland and one overseas, by 2022 with the progress point being 50% achievement of the target by 2019. We are already well over the 50% target for overseas

experiences, more than a year ahead of schedule, reaching 86% in 2016/17, and the Mainland figure is steadily increasing, now at over 31%. Not all of these experiences will be study-based, but dual degrees can play an important part, both for the individual students concerned but also for raising the profile of the University with key international partnerships which signify mutual respect between the participating universities. For example, I was delighted to agree the pioneering double degree arrangement with UCL in London in undergraduate Law whereby students do two years in London, then two years in Hong Kong and emerge with two Law degrees, one from UCL and one from HKU, and are eligible to apply to practice Law in both the UK and in Hong Kong. Similarly, the dual degree with Sciences Po in France which I signed in Paris in 2016 allows students to choose various humanities and social sciences degrees from two of the world's great universities. We have started a joint Masters degree in global public policy with the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Most recently we have agreed two dual doctoral degrees with Peking University, in Business and Public Administration.

Our aim with this programme of internationalisation, based on sound educational reasoning, is to provide our students with increasing opportunities to travel and experience life outside their "comfort zone" during their undergraduate experience at HKU.

On Innovation, a buzz word now in Hong Kong, we have worked hard to support innovative methodologies in teaching, research and knowledge exchange. We have provided a series of events to celebrate entrepreneurship, including our Dreamcatchers events; an annual joint workshop with students and staff from Stanford University, famous for its innovation prowess; and the recent opening of our innovation hub iDendron. An example that I am personally proud of – and here my wife Tina deserves much of the credit because the idea was born over a lunch meeting in Taiwan between Tina and myself and President Lee of Feng Chia University in Taichung – is to send our students and staff to study Taichung's famous night market, including developing an electronic payment system in partnership with Apple that led to the name of the project as the iNight Market: this is a nice example of thinking "outside the box". The opportunities for innovative technologies in collaboration with Shenzhen and as part of the Great Bay Area project and the Lok Ma Chau Loop will provide wonderful possibilities for HKU in the future and we need to be ready.

On Interdisciplinarity, we engineered new cross-Faculty links with a top-slice of funding in the last two years of budget rounds, creating a pot that was preferentially awarded to interdisciplinary projects. We have joint degrees across Faculties, a wonderful core curriculum that allows students to study subjects very different from their primary field of interest, and numerous examples of staff and students from very different parts of the university working with one another and with outside parties. All of these 3 Is are guaranteed to produce Impact, the 4th I: we need to be able to describe and measure Impact, not least because the next research assessment exercise of the UGC will allocate 15% of the assessment value to measures of Impact. Impact basically means contributing to making the world a better place, a very worthy aim for all that we do here at HKU.

We have taken steps to make the University a better employer. These include a raft of family-friendly policies around our staff conditions, such as better breast-feeding facilities, improved maternity and paternity leave arrangements and mentorship schemes for early career staff, especially women. We have ensured that the composition of decision-making bodies is more gender balanced than before and with more transparent, and quicker, procedures. In the past, HKU had frequently failed to secure the desired appointees purely because we took so long to make up our mind and make an employment offer: in the competitive world of modern higher education, this is risky and simply unacceptable. We have streamlined appointments procedures by identifying and addressing delay points and removing duplications. We have introduced new academic staffing career tracks to better recognise the contributions of staff in teaching and research. We have introduced my concept of the age of 60 as a “breakpoint” in the employee/employer relationship, so that instead of thinking about employment beyond normal retirement age as a decision simply about extension or non-extension of previous conditions, we have made provision for a renegotiation around the age of 60 so that an employee’s role may change in the new contract, for example to give a greater focus on teaching or research than previously, according to the individual’s strengths and her or his wishes, and the University’s needs and resources. We have improved the transparency of staffing decisions on tenure, promotion and employment beyond standard retirement age, and taken steps to ensure that gender equity and other aspects of equal opportunities are considered in all the University’s decision-making processes.

We banned bottled water on campus as part of our efforts to support environmental sustainability and I was pleased to see that the Hong Kong government has recently taken similar action on bottled water: maybe another example of imitation being the finest form of flattery! We have taken radical steps to address the University’s chronic shortage of living accommodation. We took the necessary but potentially unpopular decision to sub-divide some of the inappropriately large flats. We have brought back from the private rental market as many flats as possible that can be prioritised for staff usage. Capitalising on the HKU MTR station, we courageously bought a block of flats in Kowloon and we are on the lookout for more property to purchase or rent. We boldly resolved an impasse with the government over rental payments that had continued unresolved for some 9 years and was preventing an agreement for a new longer lease for the High West site to allow us to redevelop the accommodation there.

In 2014, my first year in office, the University was at the centre of controversy because of the participation of some of our staff and students in the ‘Occupy’ protests. As the relatively new leader of the University at that time, my challenge was to adhere to my own principles and those of the University, to respect freedom of speech whilst also respecting the law, and above all to ensure the personal safety of all members of the HKU family and indeed of those members of the general public with whom we interacted. I have no regrets about my decision to go to Admiralty on that famous night, 2nd October 2014, together with Joseph Sung of CUHK. It was a defining moment of my presidency and if we helped to prevent escalation, as many have said we did, I am delighted.

Too often, events at HKU have been politicised, sometimes cynically so by those with vested interests. I hope in the future that the focus can be on the excellence of HKU and indeed all of Hong Kong's universities. Hong Kong has more universities in the top 100 per head of population than any other city on the planet. I was pleased when the incoming Chief Executive referred to this fact in her inauguration speech.

Amongst my proudest achievements, and one of the many reasons for my optimism about the University's future, is the high quality of the senior staff that I have recruited during my time here, to add to the superb staff members that were already here. We have a senior management team with diverse experience from the United States, Europe and Singapore as well as Hong Kong. I have recruited superbly talented academics from all over the world to replace retiring Deans: when I leave, 7 of our 10 Faculties will have a different Dean in post or due to arrive compared to when I arrived, and a search for the 8th is about to start. The new recruits come from top universities in United States, United Kingdom, Mainland China, New Zealand and Hong Kong, and the most recent has the added advantage of being female, so that we have a little more diversity amongst our Deans than when I arrived. In addition we have created the Asia Global Institute with the generous support of the Fung Foundation and recruited a highly talented Director from Yale, Chen Zhiwu. This recruitment pattern is indicative of the exalted place that HKU holds in the world of higher education: able to attract talent from all over the world including the best universities in North America, Europe, Greater China and Australasia. The same is true of our students: year after year we attract the top scoring students from Hong Kong and from the Mainland. The excellence of our students never ceases to impress me, whether it is in the classes that I have taught here myself or on my many opportunities to meet and interact with HKU students as I go about my daily work. With people of such calibre in the University, HKU is very well-equipped for the future.

One of the commitments that I made when I signed up the University to the United Nations Women HeForShe initiative was to treble the proportion of women in senior leadership positions. We have now achieved that: when I arrived, 9% of the staff at Dean level or above at HKU were women. Today it is 29%.

Another signal achievement of the HeForShe initiative has been the creation of five scholarships a year to fully fund students from those parts of the world with the least access to higher education and the weakest economic development, as judged by the relevant United Nations indices, to come to HKU. Earlier this year the first five awardees arrived: one each from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Laos, Pakistan and Syria. Five talented young women who would never otherwise have dreamed of coming here, now adding to the diversity of our campus, classrooms and residential accommodation, ultimately becoming ambassadors and role models for us in parts of the world in which we were previously little known. Another triumph of internationalisation.

The University today is a more diverse, modern and transparent organization than it was when I arrived. However, there is still much to do: the modernization project that we have called SMARTER@HKU has been running for about a year now and will improve the efficiency of our

processes, our purchasing, our facilities management and many other aspects of our operations, and as it does so it will release resources that can be re-diverted to support academic developments. The end result will be a more nimble and efficient university that will be an even better place to work and study.

Philanthropic income to the University has remained very strong: we are forever grateful to our many generous supporters. Earlier this year we received the largest donation in the University's 106 year history, 1.244 billion from the Hong Kong Jockey Club. We are now well past 100 endowed professorships, each representing a 10 million donation so that represents over another 1 billion in donations. We have pledges of almost another billion towards capital projects, much of which will I hope support the long-awaited development at number 2 University Drive. Thus the superb facilities which the University already enjoys will be further improved in the next few years: this would not have been possible without the ongoing and much-appreciated generosity of various donors.

I will close with another comment about rankings. As mentioned at the start and illustrated in the [attached slides](#), there has been a turnaround in the University's position in the three major international league tables. In the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (chart 1) from 2011 to 2014 there was a slow but steady decline in the University's position. Then from 2014 there was a stabilisation, and in the latest ranking our position has improved. Chart 2 shows the Quacquarelli-Symonds (QS) World University Rankings: there is a very similar pattern with a progressive fall until 2016 and then an improvement in the last two years. Finally chart 3 shows the Shanghai Jiao-Tong Academic Ranking of World Universities: prior to 2015 we oscillated at the lower levels and in the last two years there has been a substantial improvement in our position. In all three of these rankings we are the highest ranked of Hong Kong's universities and in all three our position has improved in the last two years. Trends are widely believed to be more significant in rankings than absolute numbers, so the reversal of a previous downward trend into a current upward trend is to be welcomed.

In addition, in the QS subject rankings, as well as the world's number 1 ranked Dental School that I have already mentioned, we are in the top 10 for architecture, linguistics, civil engineering and social policy. In the Times Higher Education subject rankings we are number 4 in the world for Education, with only Stanford, Harvard and Oxford above us, and we are number 18 in the world for Law. Therefore 7 of our 10 Faculties are in the top 20 in the world in one or other ranking, 6 are in the top 10 and two are in the top 4: we must be doing something right! In the Times Higher Education ranking of internationalisation, we have been ranked number 3 in the world for the last two years. The two universities above us this year, both in Switzerland, are not comprehensive universities so we can justifiably say that we are the number 1 comprehensive university in the world for internationalisation.

Thank you again to all students, staff, alumni and friends of the University for all your help and support during my time here. I have worked hard for the university throughout my time here. I have always done my very best to adhere to the principles of a modern, internationally credible university and to stand up for what I believe in. I will forever feel that I left this place too soon

and I will seriously miss the University and its people, but I will watch HKU's future progress with great interest and with considerable pride for being part of starting some things which will, in my opinion, bear further fruit in the years to come. Be optimistic, positive, bold, innovative, but above all be proud of HKU. This is a superb university and it has been my honour to be part of it.

Thank you.