

**The Dean's Speech
at the HKU Law Alumni Reunion Dinner (27 November 2009)**

Chief Justice, Secretary for Justice, Dr C H Leong, Vice-Chancellor, Ms Lucy Yen, distinguished guests, alumni, friends, ladies and gentlemen,

As Lucy was speaking, I thought of the movie 'Somewhere in Time' and imagined the scene that the elegant Lucy walked into this Hall from the far end as a freshman. As she walks in, she changes, and she eventually comes onto the stage as the President of our Alumni Association. The distance is short, but the time span is 40 years, which is more than the working life of many people. Thus, I am particularly touched tonight when teachers and alumni in the last 40 years are connected once again in this great Hall, the symbol of our University. While 40 years may sound a long period of time, I am sure that the famous warning from the late Professor Dafydd Evans still rings loud and clear in many generations of law students, which is: "Look to your right, look to your left, one of you will not be here next year." Let me extend a special welcome to Mrs Maggie Evans. Many of our founding teachers are with us tonight, and may I welcome Professor John Rear, Judge Bernard Downey, and Mr Alan Smith. Thank you so much for coming back all the way home!

I am also touched to see so many guests are with us tonight. You have graced us with your presence, and let me welcome and thank you for your support once again.

It would be redundant of me to go through on this occasion the achievements of the law school – we all know the events, the stories and the persons involved. In any case, this issue of the Convocation Newsletter, which has come out only this afternoon and a copy of which is in your package, has spelt out some of them. Our Vice-Chancellor has been telling me that the Faculty of Law is one of the strongest Faculties at HKU, and when I come to think of it, we do lead in a number of ways. Back in 1978, long before any public outcry for gender equality, we were the first professional school in the University that has reached a gender ratio of 50:50 between male and female students (when the medical faculty was still flooded with male students, as Dr C H Leong can no doubt testify!). Since then, the poor male students have never been able to regain the throne and have at one stage come close to become an endangered species. There were times

when other faculties wondered if we were a lady's faculty on the sports field when all our prizes were collected by female sports ladies, notably the formidable star sportswomen like Barbara Hung who, as I was told, broke 17 records of the University in sports competition when she was only in Year One! Well, one feeble attempt to restore the male dignity is that we are able to produce a candidate for the contested election of the Chief Executive in 2007! Alan Leong SC of course.

The past is the past. If I can be slightly more serious, let me share some thoughts on our future.

A few weeks ago when it was announced that Shanghai is going to build its Disneyland, there seems to be worries that we might not be able to compete with Shanghai. Certainly we can't, when there are more land in Mainland cities for development, with much lower labour cost. However, there are equally things in Hong Kong that are not easily replaced or reproduced. Our competitive edge lies in our core values: our legal system, our rule of law, our independence of the judiciary and the legal profession, our respect for freedom of thoughts and expression, and our relentless pursuit for liberty. These are the core values that shape HK into what it is today. These are the core values that form the pillar of success of HK, and they will continue to do so. This is the area where education comes in, and where the Law Faculty will have a unique role to play. 40 years ago we made an important decision to set up the law school. This has had profound impact on upholding the rule of law in HK in the following 4 decades. Today, our challenges are to continue to pass on these core values to the future generations of law students.

In this regard, Hong Kong is unique. It is the only common law jurisdiction in China and one of the very few successful examples in the Asia-Pacific Region of enshrining the rule of law and independence of the legal system. Being the oldest and one of the most prestigious law schools in the territory, the Faculty should be, and is setting itself to become the education and training hub of the rule of law in the wider region of Asia. We have an undeniable role to play in contributing to the rule of law in Mainland China. Indeed, over the last decade, about 500 top students, young academics, government officials and judges from the Mainland have graduated from our LLB or the Master of Common Law programme, and we believe they have brought and will continue to bring

their common law education and training back to the Mainland. But we went beyond China. The Faculty has since 1999 been offering education in human rights law to students from many Asia's developing countries where such education is most relevant, and we have already seen that the about 200 graduates to date have begun to make an impact on their home soil. We have a distinct role to play and should be able to leave a mark and make a difference in this Region.

Another of our core values is our readiness to serve our community. On our 40th anniversary, we would like to sow another seed of a pro bono culture – a culture to serve our community. Among other things, we are going to introduce a clinical programme. We have launched a pilot scheme at the Small Claims Tribunal earlier this year where law students would assist the parties to prepare their claims. We are introducing the Duty Lawyers Free Legal Advisory Scheme on campus where students would assist qualified lawyers to provide legal advisory service. We are also working with an NGO to assist refugee claimants to make their claim for the refugee status. The message behind is that we should make use of our legal education to contribute to our society.

At the same time, as a global law school, the Faculty has furthered its internationalization efforts with a number of key collaborative agreements – the LLB/JD double degrees with UBC, the double LLB degree programme with King's College London, double master's programme with the University of Zurich, as well as a number of collaborative research endeavours with many leading universities in the world. Closer at home, building upon the success of our double degrees on law and business and law and government, we are going to introduce another double degree on law and literature. These efforts and our international collaboration will enhance the quality of our education, bring in top international experts, help recruit the best students and scholars, and make the Faculty the ideal intellectual locus for a vibrant interchange and development of legal education.

In order to support all these initiatives, I am glad to report that in 2012 we will have our own law building at the centenary campus, which is on the western end of the existing campus opposite the Belchers. Please take a look at the model outside the Hall. It will

be a 9-storey building with state of the arts facilities. This is an exciting development and I look forward to welcoming all of you in our new home soon.

To mark our 40th anniversary, we are producing a commemorative volume. Instead of marking our achievements, we would like to put the development of the law school in the context of the development of the rule of law in Hong Kong. We have included a flyer in the package and hope you would support this endeavour.

I cannot end my speech without thanking a very important person: my good friend, Lucy Yen, the President of the Law Alumni Association. Lucy and her team make this wonderful evening a reality. They have been working on this event for almost a year. If you find this evening a memorable and enjoyable one, credit goes to Lucy and her team. If there is any shortcoming, the faults are mine. Indeed, under the very able leadership of Lucy, as well as the immediate past President Mr Kenneth Kwok, the Law Alumni Association, with its mentorship programme and other workshops, has become an integral part of our legal education, and I owe my gratitude to both of them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for joining us tonight and sharing our pride and joy. Your presence and support means a lot to us. I believe the Faculty will continue to thrive, and with your continued support, we can take the law school to new heights. There is service to render and glory to covet, and it will be a lot more years on. Thank you very much!