Chairman’s Column

INAUGURATION CEREMONY 2015 - 29 August 2015

My Very Dear Fellow Convocation Members,

I would like to share with you what I think I said to the new students earlier this week at the Inauguration Ceremony, having been asked by a few members to so do since. I did not exactly say anything dramatic or new, but I said it from the heart. Here it is, for what it is worth.

“Professor Leung, Mr. President, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I join the other distinguished speakers to welcome you to the University and to the HKU family. This is indeed a great occasion for everyone. Today marks the beginning of a new chapter for most of you and I believe you would remember this day for a long time. I still recall the day I attended my first inauguration ceremony in the Sixties when the then Registrar, a Mr. Llewellyn, told us that from that day onward, we would be addressed as Mr. and Miss, implying that we would be treated and greeted as adults and were expected to behave as such. That was some half a century ago.

I hope you have enjoyed the video on campus life and are looking forward to becoming part of the scene. Yes, campus life is what going to the university is all about. Make the best out of these few years, for you would rarely have the opportunity to make so many mistakes in such a safe environment upon graduation.

Today I am here because I am the Chairman of the Convocation, and it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you this great institution of the University. Convocation is a statutory body set up in 1958, comprising all graduates and teaching staff of the University. Membership is automatic, meaning that no admission procedures or fees would be payable, and that you would all become members on graduation, joining the ranks of the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Deans and so on, to name just a few. As Chairman, I would preside at all meetings of Convocation, unless the Chancellor is present when he would preside.
Convocation now has over 160,000 members and still counting. It was set up in 1958 when Sir Robert Black was Chancellor. On that occasion Convocation, he said, “Convocation would give the graduates of the University, as a body, an opportunity to have a voice in the University affairs and, also, because it would help to bring the University and the community of Hong Kong closer together.” In short, Convocation is there to work with the University for the good not only of the University, but also of the community, and Convocation seeks to offer help and ideas to the University wherever it can.

Our constitution provides for a Standing Committee to be formed, comprising 24 elected members, and I am one of them, but with more than 160,000 members, it is ostensibly difficult to speak for all of them, or to network with them, which is part of our mission. Our work is voluntary and unpaid, but can be extremely interesting and challenging. I look forward to having some of you volunteering to work on the Standing Committee after your graduation. Believe me, it could be sooner than you think, so play hard and live the campus life while you can. Thank you very much.”

So, there you are; and I am beginning to think what I might say next year; and I hope to talk to you again soon.