

**Grand Opening Ceremony of
OUHK Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare (IOH)
8 January 2021**

**Address by Prof. Yuk-Shan Wong, SBS, BBS, JP
OUHK President**

OUHK: Our Humble Journey of Pride

The Honorable Mrs Carrie Lam, Chief Executive of the HKSAR and Chancellor of OUHK,
Mr Philip Chen, Chairman of The Hong Kong Jockey Club,
Pro-Chancellor **Dr Charles Lee**,
Council Chairman **Mr Michael Wong**,
Former Council Chairmen **Dr Philip Wu** and **Dr Eddy Fong**,
Deputy Council Chairman **Dr Conrad Wong**,
colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen,

A big welcome to a big day at The Open University of Hong Kong. In particular, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam and Mr Philip Chen, Chairman of The Hong Kong Jockey Club, to officiate the ceremony and deliver opening speeches.

We are pleased that there are so many ardent supporters of the Open University in this gathering. Your supports have made a lot of achievements possible in this University. I am obliged to report to you what we have done.

Above all, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has been so supportive of OUHK. Six years ago, we were glad to open our Jockey Club Campus. That was our second campus. Today, we open our third new campus. Within six years, we open two new campuses. We are so grateful to The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust as well as other dedicated supporters, many of them are here today.

As an academic, my guiding principle is: humility. But for today, as we open our third and new campus, I must say there is so much for us to be proud of. So, on this special day, and with all my humbleness, I will walk you through our journey of pride.

At the outset, I must say something about the title of the University, which was in the news last month. OUHK began as a humble distance education institution. But we are now far more than just an open education university.

Our full-time face-to-face undergraduate student population alone is more than 10,000. That makes us the sixth largest university in Hong Kong. On top of that, we have more than 8,300 part-time students and 1,000 post-graduate students. With a total student population of about 20,000 pursuing diverse professional qualifications and different degrees, we are now a full-fledged, full-size, full-function university.

This is why members of the OUHK community and our friends agree that we should change our name. The University Council has decided to adopt the new title of “Hong Kong Metropolitan University”. This is a suitable title for the University, as it shows our unique position in metropolitan Hong Kong. We are in the process of seeking amendment of the ordinance governing the University.

Surely University retitling signifies our path of transformation from a modest distance education institution to a full-fledged university. There are also other developments that clearly demonstrate our journey of pride.

As many people do not know, we are not government-funded. For UGC universities, the Government provides a subsidy to each student throughout their studies. For us, we do not receive government recurrent grants like the UGC institutions. And the tuition fees students pay are our only recurrent income.

Over the last few years, the number of secondary school leavers in Hong Kong has dropped. Universities across Hong Kong have come under increasing pressure as the candidate pool shrinks. This year, JUPAS applicants dropped by more than six per cent.

But on the contrary, our student enrolment has kept going up. This year our student intake increased by 4.4%. We did spend money on marketing campaigns to attract students. But more importantly, students are attracted by our academic programmes that meet their learning aspirations, that meet our society’s needs, and meet the job market’s demand.

Our student enrolment kept going up while applicant numbers have dropped. So this is the reason: we give our students inspiring programmes, solid learning, and fulfilling pastoral care.

Our students may not have the highest scores in JUPAS or other public exam. But they are motivated students, responsible students, hard-working students. They enjoy studying at our university. They cherish the opportunities. We are proud of them.

Yes, this is our university culture. We are proud of our students. We are able to attract students in growing numbers. And this helps make our financial situation healthy. We even manage to achieve some operation surplus in recent years.

As a non-profit education institute, we are proud to invest more in our students, and for our students. We offer a range of support to our students. We were able to give special financial allowance to each and every student who asked for it. Under a recent student development programme launched under the pandemic, all the students need to do is to practice writing a good CV, and then they would get financial subsidy at this difficult time. More than three thousand students get this thousand-dollar assistance. We also create paid jobs on campus for our students. We work with employers to create paid internships for our students.

For our teachers and colleagues, we revamped our remuneration structure and introduced a Pay and Reward System, which gives out reward according to work performance. The new system works well. We give a decent salary increase to our colleagues. We were also able to provide a special year-end bonus to all our teachers and colleagues last year. This year, we are doing it again.

It is not just about money. It is about recognition. Our colleagues do far more with far less than their counterparts elsewhere do. We are so proud of them, and we are proud to be able to give them the accolades they so richly deserve at this difficult time.

We also do well in research. Just a couple of months ago, the Research Grants Council announced the result of the latest round of competitive research funding for self-financing sector. We ranked first in terms of total research funding received, and first in terms of Faculty Development Scheme. Our research is comparable to our UGC peers. We are so proud of that.

Adding all these up together, this is why when the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications reviewed our operation this year – which they do once every six years – they highly praised us in six key areas. Four of these commendations are that we provide high quality programmes for our students, we provide excellent student experience, and we offer excellent pastoral care to our students. They also commended the University for adopting a new reward system that promotes a performance culture.

Our strong foundation in Hong Kong allows us to expand into education elsewhere. We are joining hands with Zhaoqing Government and Zhaoqing University to establish a university on a 1.67 million square metre site in Greater Bay Area. The Ministry of Education is actively considering our application. This is an exciting new milestone for

our university. With limited resources, we are integrating our education services with the Greater Bay Area. We are proud of that.

Another big milestone in the journey of pride is of course the opening of the Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare Campus today. This new campus hugely improves our students' learning experience. It enables us to run new programmes that our society needs, that parents and students want, and the job market demands.

For example we have launched a new degree programme in physiotherapy. Hong Kong is seriously short of physiotherapists. But only very few university offers this programme. It is a costly programme because of the huge investment in equipment and labs plus all the barriers in academic accreditation and professional recognition. Against all odds we successfully do it. It is a programme of very high cost. But Hong Kong needs it. So we do it. We are proud of that.

I have kept talking about how proud we are. There is one more big accolade. Although we receive no direct recurrent subsidy from them, the Government has given us a big helping hand in terms of non-recurrent funding and policy support. From day one we are a Government-supported university, although not government-funded. And we are grateful for that.

So the opening of this new campus today not only represents an expansion of OUHK in physical sense, but marks the triumph of the OUHK spirit. The goal of our latest Strategic Plan is to "Striving to nurture, and transforming the future". This is exactly what we are doing.

Once again, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and all other supporters. You are our great partners in our journey of pride. Without your support, there is no way we can achieve all that I have said.

This is the last time I address such a major gathering in my capacity as President of the University. It is fitting that my last key address marks the beginning of a new chapter for our university. I am sure the university is all set for greater pride and confidence.

Thank you.