

## President calls for harmony at Olympiad of the Mind



*The University President, Prof. Poon Chung-kwong, was among 16 of the world's most influential scholars invited to speak at the Seventh Olympiad of the Mind, which serves as the intellectual counterpart to the Olympic Games of the Body. With the theme of "Improving global welfare and security via communication", this two-day international forum was held in Paris from 21 to 22 May. Following in-depth discussions at the forum, policy recommendations for action will be disseminated around the world.*

*The following is an abridged excerpt from Prof. Poon's presentation. By citing his experience in tapping Buddhist wisdom as the head of PolyU, Prof. Poon appeals to leaders across the world to put the holistic education and development of people at the top of their agenda, and to more widely apply the humane teachings of Buddhism to achieve peace and harmony.*

### Sowing seeds of harmony in a world rampant with discord — an educator's perspective

Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal."

It is unfortunate that throughout history many political leaders did not put peace and harmony at the top of their agenda. The influential thinker Niccolo Machiavelli opined that for state leaders, "it is much safer to be feared than loved": they need to be ready to resort to force as a means to stay in power and achieve their ends. Today, I would like to draw more widespread attention to the humanist philosophies at the core of Buddhism as an enlightening alternative to the kind of ethics as propagated by Machiavelli.

#### Applying Buddhist teachings in university governance

According to Confucius's classic work *The Great Learning*, in order to rightly

govern the state, it is necessary to soundly manage one's family; to manage one's family, one must first cultivate oneself; and to cultivate oneself, one must rectify one's heart. I have found this to be truly the case.

Personally, I have tapped Buddhist wisdom in cultivating my own philosophy and outlook in life. I have found these teachings to be of immense value in pointing the way forward in grooming young talents and in managing a university in my role as President of PolyU for the past 14 years.

Many institutional leaders set their eyes on leading people to achieve measurable targets, with an emphasis on the economic benefits for the institution. But the Buddhist idea about the transience of material benefits and the need to put people first means that one should care not only for the benefit of oneself but also that of other individuals.

While leaders take charge of an institution's business, they should also care for the mental and spiritual well-being of individual members of the institution.

My management style at PolyU is one which strives to realize a humane, people-centered management approach, which calls for kindness and respect for all staff and students as individuals. Harmony and team spirit across the campus is built by opening up formal and informal communication channels for genuine dialogue.

Guided by Buddhist wisdom in the famous line in *The Heart Sutra* "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form", I always remind myself that a leader must not be complacent, for success of any form at one point is subject to future changes. While all things in this universe appear in "form", form is no different from or above emptiness. On the other hand, "emptiness" is not nothingness. The true meaning of

## *About the Seventh Olympiad of the Mind*

The Olympiad assembles some of the world's most powerful minds to address the major global and regional challenges facing the planet. It was organized by the International STEPS Foundation (STEPS for Science, Technology, Economics and Politics for Society), or ISF, a non-profit, scientific-educational organization accredited by the United Nations.

The celebrated speakers this year included:

- Dr Leon Lederman, Nobel Laureate in Physics and Former Director, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (US);
- Dr Lee Yuan-tseh, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry and President, Academy of Sciences, Taiwan;
- Prof. Yves Quéré, Co-Chair of the InterAcademy Panel on International Issues, and Member of the French Academy of Sciences (France);
- Prof. Pieter J.D. Drenth, President of All European Academies (ALLEA), Netherlands;
- Prof. Wm. A. Wulf, President of the US National Academy of Engineering; and
- The Honorable Tam Dalyell, Member of the House of Commons and Rector, Edinburgh University (UK).

Previous Olympiad speakers included the Rt. Hon. Frederik Willem De Klerk, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and past president of South Africa; Gerard Piel, founder of the Scientific American magazine; Harold Kroto, Nobel Laureate in Physics; and Dorothy Hackbarth, president of UNESCO Association of the US. The past Olympiads have been held in Greece, Harvard University, the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta and Paris.

“emptiness” is that everything in our world exists in a constant flux of changing causes and conditions. Things do not exist in isolation; they do not have an unchanging nature of their own.

In a university setting, management and staff members, as inter-related members of one institution, play diverse roles but are all equal as individuals. The leader must therefore be grateful for people's support, and sincerely respect staff as individuals and value their ideas and views on various issues. In line with the Buddhist teaching about “form” and “emptiness”, PolyU sees itself as part of a whole. Following Hong Kong's reunification with China in 1997, the University readily embraces its role as an integral member of the higher education community in China. In nurturing the growth and development of students, we

adopt a holistic approach which emphasizes the all-round development of students.

### **Implications for Hong Kong and the Region**

Over these years since 1997, I have been deeply impressed by how the “one country, two systems” concept was implemented in Hong Kong. The future of Hong Kong lies very much in its successful integration with the Chinese mainland. The key to achieving this, I believe, is by fostering genuine communication, mutual respect and understanding within the Hong Kong community and between Hong Kong and the mainland.

Buddhist philosophies have long been influential in many Asian cultures. If top leaders across the region can subscribe to the people-focused teachings of Buddhism

and foster communication and understanding, I am optimistic that peace can prevail. If capitalist Hong Kong can thrive in harmony with socialist China as one country, so can different nations co-exist in peace.

### **Some food for thought**

I take this opportunity to make two recommendations here. Firstly, I wish to stress that education is the best way to groom future leaders. We may be able to see the rise of more benevolent rulers and leaders in the future, if only we can dedicate our resources and efforts in the right direction to nurture our younger generation.

I therefore urge educators and leaders across different nations and cultures to always put the holistic education and development of their people at the top of their agenda. I urge them to attach great importance to the mental well-being of people under their care, without neglecting their own attitudes and beliefs.

Now comes my second recommendation. Buddhist teachings can offer viable alternatives to leadership which is founded on control, authority and confrontation. In particular, the humanistic principles behind these teachings can no doubt be more widely applied by policy makers, CEOs and statesmen alike to achieve peace and harmony in the modern world.

The world community has learnt costly lessons from two World Wars and then the Cold War. Can leaders of the world do something together to prevent another major wave of terror and unrest? How can we help to bring about peace and harmony in the minds and hearts of people around us? I have tried to address these questions by drawing from Buddhist teachings. To conclude, I am optimistic that the more people can be stimulated to ponder over these questions, the closer we will get to a workable solution to the vast array of socio-economic and political problems facing humankind. ❖

# Alumni body marches into a bright new future

The year of 2005 carries double meaning to the Federation of PolyU Alumni Associations (FHKPUAA). It marks not only the 10th anniversary of the Federation, but also a time of harvest for years of efforts on alumni relations development. *Profile* speaks to its Chairman Dr Ng Tat-lun.

The establishment of the Federation in 1995 gave rise to a strong force for uniting alumni of different backgrounds, Dr Ng recalled. Over the past decade, the Federation has enjoyed remarkable growth, with its number of affiliated associations jumping from 14 to nearly 40. All these are evidence of the increased support received from alumni, their families and friends.

Dr Ng said credits should go to the past presidents and committee members for their excellent groundwork, and also Federation members for their longstanding support. Special credit should also be given to the President Prof. Poon Chung-kwong for his robust support over the years.

Looking ahead, Dr Ng said there was much room for further development of the Federation. In addition to its wide array of alumni activities, such as reunion dinners, homecoming carnivals and tree-planting events, more partnerships can be built with local and overseas alumni bodies.

In June, Federation representatives made a special trip to Macau, marking its first exchange with the alumni association of the University of Macau. The meeting opened up various collaborative opportunities between the two associations.



“Despite our glorious past, the Federation still has a long way to go. I very much hope that more fruitful partnerships can be built, paving way to another decade of bright future,” he concluded.



Dr Ng (second row, fourth from right) poses with the committee members of the Federation in the “PolyU Alumni Homecoming Carnival”.

## Milestones of PolyU alumni development

- 1995 – Inauguration of FHKPUAA
- 1996 – Establishment of PolyU (Western Canada) Association, the first overseas association
  - The first biennial “PolyU Alumni Homecoming Carnival”
- 1997 – The first biennial selection for “Outstanding PolyU Alumni Award”
- 1999 – Inauguration of PolyU Alumni and Past Employees (Eastern Canada) Association
- 2000 – The first bi-annual “Alumni Reunion Dinner”
- 2002 – Inauguration of PolyU (Australia) Association
- 2004 – Establishment of PolyU (Eastern USA) Association
  - The first “Greening HK by PolyU Alumni” activity



## Home-coming celebration

More than 400 graduates had a joyful evening at the 10th anniversary reunion dinner of the Federation held at the Student Halls of Residence on 9 July.

Jointly organized by the University and the Federation of PolyU Alumni Associations, the event also gathered together graduates of 1990-1995 to celebrate for their 10th anniversary of graduation.

## PolyU members on HKSAR Honours List

On 1 July 2005, 10 distinguished PolyU members were named on the HKSAR Chief Executive's Honours List.

Name (in alphabetical order)	Award
Dr Lui Che-woo (Court Member)	Gold Bauhinia Star
The Honourable Chan Kam-lam (Alumnus)	Silver Bauhinia Star
Dr The Honourable Lui Ming-wah (Council Member)	
Mr Albert Cheuk Chun-yin (Alumnus)	Hong Kong Police Medal for Meritorious Service
Mr Lau Chi-keung (Alumnus)	Medal of Honour
Dr Raymond Chan (Alumnus & Council Member)	
Dr Francis Choi Chee-ming (Council Member)	
Mr Roy Chung Chi-ping (Deputy Chairman of University Council)	Justice of the Peace
Dr Lam Tai-fai (Alumnus & Court Member)	
Ir Peter Wong Kwok-keung (Alumnus)	

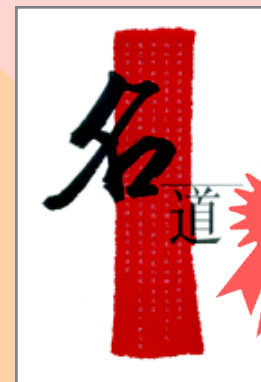
## International accolades for alumni affairs and fundraising efforts

The University has recently snatched top honours for its three initiatives organized by the Alumni Affairs and Development Office (AADO) in the 2005 Circle of Excellence Awards, presented by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). From a total of more than 2,800 entries, PolyU won four medals.

**Grand Gold Medal & Gold Medal in "Alumni Relations Programmes"**



Last November, the University mobilized 1,000 alumni, their friends and families to plant more than 5,000 shrubs at the King's Park in the "Greening Hong Kong by PolyU Alumni" activity.



**Silver Medal in "Fund-raising Programmes"**

A Chinese book named Ming Tao was published in January, featuring interviews with 50 distinguished persons from Hong Kong on their success stories. The project raised around \$1.5 million for the University's Student Development Fund.



Ms Cora Sit, Acting Head of AADO (second from left) and Ms Ada Leung, Senior Development Manager, AADO (second from right) receive the honours from Mr John Lippincott, President of CASE (first from left), and Mr Kent D. Rollins, Chairman of the Board of Trustees 2004-05.

**Bronze Medal in "Special Events"**



In recognition of international movie star Jackie Chan Kong-sang's contribution to Hong Kong, PolyU staged "An Evening with Prof. Jackie Chan" on 29 January 2004. During the evening, Jackie was conferred with the title of Honorary Professor by our School of Hotel and Tourism Management.