Helping Undergraduates See the Bigger Picture

In a world where business schools proliferate and competition for the best students is keen, how do you distinguish yourself? This question occupies Professor Amy Lau, Chair Professor of Accounting and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Affairs, who recognises students face the same dilemma when they look for jobs.

Her answer is to the point: you have to look beyond your business focus.

“We want a university education that trains students to be better persons, not just technocrats,” she said.

“When businesses are recruiting, they are not only looking at a candidates’ business knowledge, but also their personality and broader outlook.”

To help students gain the advantage, the Faculty has developed a programme that provides plenty of opportunities for widening their understanding of the world and developing important people and communication skills.

The emphasis is, of course, still on business studies and knowledge. Outcome-based learning has recently been implemented to provide the clearest possible learning goals for students and ensure their studies are meaningful. But many “added value” features have been incorporated so they can round out their education.

Within the curriculum, students are encouraged to take courses outside the Faculty and do double majors or minors, thus gaining a broader perspective. They are also required to study a course with international components, which can be taken in any faculty.

An exchange programme lets students study overseas with one of our exchange partners. In 2007-08, the Faculty sent 199 undergraduate students abroad and hosted 278 students from more than 70 countries. Some programmes, such as International Business & Global Management, also incorporate overseas field study tours to Singapore and Dubai.

Added features also have a professional focus so students can gain insights to the working business world. The Professional Preparation Programme provides opportunities for students to interact with business executives.
HR managers and representatives from professional organisations, who provide tips on job expectations, applications and interviews, as well as developing leadership skills. Internships offered through the Faculty and CEDARS provide students with ample working opportunities in companies related to their specialities.

The proof that this approach works for undergraduates lies in the quality of students that are enrolling in the Faculty's programmes.

"Our goal is to admit top quality students and we have done very well in attracting these students. We offer some of the most sought-after and unique programmes in this university. Considering HKU is ranked the 18th best university in the world [by the Times Higher Educational Supplement], one can see we are offering programmes that are internationally-competitive and among the world's best," Professor Lau said.

The Faculty's programmes have attracted keen interest from students with high JUPAS scores and early admission applicants. The Faculty also attracts the highest number of non-local students on campus, which increases the diversity of the student body. For example, of the 250 Mainland undergraduates admitted to all 10 of HKU's faculties in 2007-08, 121 chose the Faculty of Business.

Being surrounded by high achievers also stimulates students to push beyond their boundaries and develop all aspects of their lives. Professor Lau often cites the example of Jason Yip (see page 3), who learned languages, worked abroad and volunteered in the community, all while pursuing a BBA in Accounting and Finance.

"An undergraduate education is important, but it doesn’t determine your future. Things change and students need to equip themselves for the changing environment. They have to be able to adapt to change and have a vision of where they want to be in future," she said.

"We hope that what we do here in the Faculty helps students to develop as people, as well as business professionals, so they have the skills to adapt and succeed in the world."

Cracking a ‘Chinese Puzzle’

China's astonishing economic growth and transformation over the past 30 years has had many admirers, but also left some scratching their heads. How can the Chinese economy perform so well, but its institutions perform comparatively poorly in international rankings?

One of the world leaders in the field of transition economics, Gerard Roland, Professor of Economics and Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, has been putting his mind to this question and recently visited the Faculty to share his views.

Professor Roland gave a public lecture on “Institutions and Growth: The Chinese Puzzle”, in which he argued that the mismatch between China’s “growth miracle” and the reputation of its institutions could not be explained by the standard view of institutions. Rather, it should be regarded in light of China-specific institutional changes, particularly the roles of yardstick competition and fiscal decentralisation.

More than 200 people from HKU and the business community attended the public lecture, which was held in March.

Professor Roland has made major and widely cited contributions on the political economy of transition, as well as related issues. He is co-author of more than 100 journal articles, book chapters and books, and a consultant for the World Bank, IMF, EBRD and the European Commission.
A Standout in the Crowd

Jason Yip, a 2004 graduate in BBA (Accounting & Finance), has packed two lifetimes worth of achievements into his 27 years and there is more to come.

To date, he has worked at Goldman Sachs, been on fruitful exchanges to Kenya and Guam, learned Japanese, English and Mandarin in addition to his native Cantonese, and volunteered with troubled teens and prisoners, in addition to his studies at the Faculty of Business.

He is now learning Russian and how to play the harp, and embarking on a Master’s degree in international relations in Japan on full scholarship.

One can only wonder: how does he do it all? Hard work and discipline are the obvious answers but he also has this to say.

“When I can go beyond my life and do something that adds value to others, I am self-fulfilled. That may be selfish, but it is how I feel,” he said.

“I also think young people should have dreams and passions. If you don’t have them when you are young, how are you going to have a colourful and rewarding life?”

His own dreaming started when he was a secondary school student preparing for university. “I was looking for only one thing, to study overseas,” he said. He chose the Faculty for its reputation and its plentiful opportunities to pursue this goal.

Jason went to Kenya for six months in his second year with the non-profit group, AIESEC, to work on micro-credit projects in slums. Later he travelled to Guam on an HKU scholarship to study and undertake internship training with HSBC and, on the side, learned Japanese and helped raise awareness of Guam’s native Chamorro culture.

The trips abroad meant he took an extra year to complete his studies. “I don’t think it’s an issue to stop studying for one year,” he said. “Life can be very typical for business students – do a degree in three years, look for a good job, graduate, and that’s it. I wanted to do something different.”

Apart from the travelling, he is an active volunteer. During his time at HKU he counselled troubled youths and after graduating in 2004, he taught English and Japanese to prisoners.

His rich and varied experiences brought him to the attention of Goldman Sachs, which hired him in 2004 and have been supportive of his other interests. He is now studying international relations at Wasada University and hopes, that together with his language studies, he will be equipped to work in social development, preferably with the United Nations.

And the harp? Jason began studying it after a colleague in Kenya was able to break the ice with the local people through music, even though he did not speak Swahili.

“Music can show you how meaning and beauty can be different in different societies. I think it’s balanced me a little bit. It’s not necessary to be career-oriented all the time. We can be passionate and have dreams, and we can be different in how we make our own stories happen,” he said.
Student Achievements

Job Seekers Face the Competition

A contest that cultivates job-seeking skills has seen a strong performance by Faculty students. In the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) Hong Kong Job Hunting Competition in 2008, Lester Fung Ka Kei, Year 3 BBA (Law), was first runner-up and Jansy Man Wing Sze, Year 2 BBA (Law), was third runner-up.

Passed with Flying Colours

Two Faculty students achieved outstanding results in the Qualification Programme of the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants, which provides the knowledge and skills necessary to become CPAs. Kwan Yuk Kee, a 2005 BBA (Law) graduate, was the Gold Award winner, while Ma Yui Man, a 2006 BBA (Accounting & Finance) graduate, took bronze.

One Team, Two Prizes

A team of undergraduates walked away with two prizes at the Outstanding Financial Planning Awards for Hong Kong Undergraduates, organised by AIA – the American International Assurance Company (Bermuda) Limited.

Three in a Row

A Faculty team has won the Gold Award in the Hong Kong leg of the HSBC Young Entrepreneur Awards, the third year in a row that our students have achieved this honour. The team wrote a business plan for a sports-oriented online portal.

Winning Adventurers

Quantum Apprentice, an award programme that offers undergraduates a corporate “adventure” in real working situations through training and competition, has been won by a Faculty team.

Cheung Sin Ming, Cheung Wen Li and Ng Chui Man, all 2nd year BBA (Accounting & Finance) students, and Kwan Kin Man, a 2nd year BBA student, were the Grand Award winners. Cecilia Yang Ja Fung, 2nd year BEcon&Fin, won the Client Satisfaction Award and Outstanding Presentation Award.

Melda Tsang Tsz Man, 2nd year BBA (Law), and Michele Chan Man Hei and Daniel Tang Chung Hei, both 3rd year BBA (Law), will represent Hong Kong in the regional finals.
Research Honours

Alvin Leung, a second-year Master of Philosophy student specialising in Management Information Systems, won the Best Student Paper Award in the field of Data Mining and Applications awarded by the International MultiConference of Engineers and Computer Scientists 2008. This is the second year in a row that a research student from the Faculty has won this prestigious award.

Alvin co-authored a paper with his supervisor, Dr. Indranil Bose, which showed phishing announcements had negative impacts on a firm’s value, which increased over time.

Competing with the World’s Best

A Faculty team placed among the final six in the world’s largest business plan competition, organised by the National University of Singapore. About 450 entries were received from leading universities in the US, Europe and elsewhere. Participants worked with real-life case studies of leading Asian companies.

The Faculty’s team comprised four 1st year MBA Part Time students: Wanda Chan Ching Man, Jeff Lau Chung Leung, Louie Siu Heng Chan and Rita Lee Wai Fong.

Socially Responsible Competitors

“A Head for Business, A Heart for the World” is the slogan of Students In Free Enterprise, which mobilises university students around the world to develop community outreach projects related to economic sustainability and to become socially responsible leaders. The organisation held a China South Regional Competition in April, which was won by a 16-member team from the Faculty led by Cliff Lam Lai Ching, 3rd year BBA (International Business and Global Management). The 2nd Runner-up award went to Andrew Tang Ho Fung and Silvia Hui See Wai, both 2nd year BBA (Law) students, and Crystal Kong Chi Yun, 3rd year BBA.

A Successful Case

A Faculty team has championed in the McKinsey/HSBC Business Case Competition, a challenging contest in which teams have to draft a strategy for an unconventional business case under a tight two-hour deadline.

Elaine Geng Liting, 2nd year BEcon&Fin, Judy Lau Man Leng, 2nd year BBA (Law), George Lei Yang, 3rd year BEcon&Fin and Daniel Tang Chung Hei, 3rd year BBA (Law), were the winning team. The competition is organised by the Faculty’s Asia Case Research Centre and open to all eight universities in Hong Kong.

Cream of the Crop

A savvy approach to marketing gave two Faculty teams the winning edge in the L’Oreal Brandstorm Competition 2008, in which they had to revamp an existing L’Oreal brand. First place was taken by a team that dubbed itself “La Crème de la Crème” and whose members included Kevin Cheung King Fai, 4th year BBA, Fiona Zhuang Fei Na, 3rd year BBA and Leanne Li Gi-ming, 3rd year BBA (International Business and Global Management).
Moving On

Three longstanding and distinguished members of our Faculty are retiring, having served a combined 88 years with HKU. Mr. David Wong joined in 1976, Mr. Edward Chiu in 1979 and Dr. Jim Newton in 1981. Their tremendous knowledge and experience will be greatly missed.

Mr. Chiu said this on his departure:

“Time flies. I joined the Department of Management Studies in 1979 and we had about 12 teaching staff. The Department was within the Faculty of Social Sciences. I taught mainly basic accounting and finance courses, which were popular. I remember in one year teaching a class with 286 students and another one with over 300 students.

“The Department began offering the BBA programme in 1988 and in 1995 it became the School of Business. Together with the School of Economics and Finance, the Faculty of Business and Economics was formed in 2001 and soon became a large and popular one within HKU.

“ Apart from teaching, I like to interact with students. I have spent a lot of time giving advice to students on course selection, internships, exchanges and other matters. I also like to support the student organisations by attending their inauguration ceremonies and opening ceremonies for functions etc. After my retirement, I will continue to serve the Faculty.”

Dr. Newton gave these parting words:

“Having worked in a number of different continents before joining HKU, I knew that Asia was where I wanted to be. As I started teaching international business here in the early eighties and, as fortuitously China began her dramatic transition, I knew that I was right. And as I begin my own transition into the next cycle, Asia is still the place I want to be, and will be. Hong Kong has become home, so thanks Hong Kong and thanks HKU for making all that happen.”

New Staff

Ms. Elsie Christopher
Director of Business Communication

Ms. Christopher joined the Faculty in April 2008. Her academic interests include Teaching Methodologies and their Applications in English for Professional and Academic Purposes, Academic Writing for Business, and the Integration of Case Based Teaching and Communication Skills Development. She holds a BAH (Honours) in English and Art from Acadia University, Canada, an MA in English from Dalhousie University, Canada, and a PG Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language for Adults from Cambridge University. Ms. Christopher has been teaching English communication courses in Hong Kong since 1990.

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