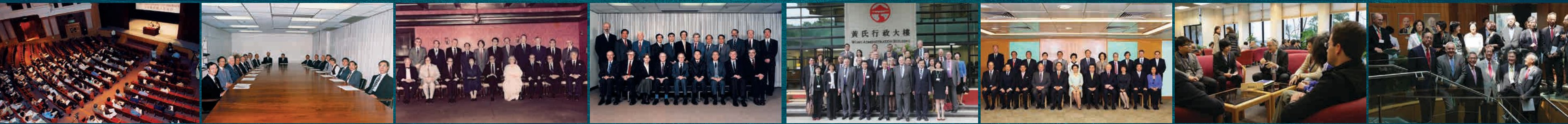


# Recollections





Professor Charles R M BANGHAM  
Former RGC Member (August 2002 - June 2006)



As Chair of the Biology and Medicine Panel from 2000 to 2005, after one year as a member of the Panel under Lap Chee Tsui's chairmanship, I witnessed an enormous increase in the volume of research grant applications. This growth in volume was accompanied by an increase in both the range and the standard of the research carried out in the Hong Kong universities. This research includes some remarkable individuals and consortia that are among the world leaders in their fields. It was both a pleasure and a privilege to take part in the review of research and the award of research grants to these original and productive groups. I also have many fond memories of my discussions with Panel members during the meetings, and with a few colleagues, a bottle of whisky and Lap Chee in his hotel room after the meeting. I look forward to watching the continuing rise of Hong Kong science.



Professor Chris BERRY  
Former RGC Member  
(July 2008 - June 2014)

Congratulations to the UGC on 50 years of achievement. During my years with the RGC, it was my great pleasure to witness the rapid growth and development of ever more world-class research in Hong Kong, and I learnt so much from the RGC's work. Thank you, and keep going!





Mrs Pamela CHAN WONG Shui, BBS, JP  
Former UGC Member (April 2007 - December 2012)

I am privileged to have served as a member of the UGC and witnessed how the UGC spearheaded changes through milestone initiatives such as: implementation of the "3+3+4" new academic structure, the Academic Development Proposal exercises, the first QAC exercise, launching of the UGC Teaching Award etc.

If I were to highlight three initiatives, the following impressed me most:

1. Implementation of the "3+3+4": There was great apprehension prior to the D day. The UGC established a Liaison Group to facilitate sharing of experiences. Jointly, Group members heard the damage control measures of a major infrastructure in Hong Kong and explored implications of admitting students below the legal age of 17. To our relief, the sector celebrated a seamless transition, much due to the comprehensive preparations to mitigate risks.
2. Effective communication with the eight funded institutions as well as the Legislature, the media and the public at large underpins the UGC efforts in driving changes at a strategic level. The UGC has established a Communications Group to oversee such efforts and has achieved satisfactory outcome.
3. Since its launch in 2011, the UGC Teaching Award has created a platform for academics to share experiences in pedagogy within and across institutions. The Award serves to reaffirm the UGC recognition on teaching excellence and the awardees have become ambassadors of good teaching.

I wish the UGC greater success in its endeavours to benefit the higher education sector in Hong Kong.



Mr Philip CHEN Nan Lok, GBS, JP  
Former UGC Member (April 2004 - January 2012)  
Former QAC Chairman (April 2008 - January 2012)

The QAC - founded in 2007 under the aegis of the UGC - was an initiative of the then Chairman Dr Alice Lam. The QAC consisted of several top academics in the world, and prominent members of Hong Kong society.

We were to assure the quality of educational experience in the UGC funded institutions was enhanced and promoted, at an internationally competitive level. We were tasked to conduct audits of the institutions and the audit reports would be published. We organised two audits per year by appointing audit teams made up of top academics from all over the world, and respected local community members. We also made sure that the panels were kept totally objective and independent. Each audit focused on one institution, and thus the first round took four years to complete.

The QAC adopted a "light touch" audit approach, but before we started on our first audit exercise, it was jokingly suggested by the media that all the Presidents were good friends of mine - until after the audit! The outcome was very positive, actually. CUHK was the first to go through an audit. We learned a lot from that, and the institutions in general found the audits fair and worthwhile, and the recommendations reasonable. The audit panels also highlighted the good points and achievements they found. I thought that was good, not only for recognition but also to promote cross learning. Even the local media, after a short while, reported the audit reports fairly and professionally.

I believe the QAC has done a great job. I have learned a lot from this experience. The exercise also affirmed my belief that we do have first rate institutions in Hong Kong.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues on the QAC and the panels, and everyone in the UGC - the three Chairpersons, my fellow members and the Secretariat - without their great efforts and support the QAC work would not be possible at all.





Professor CHENG Yin-cheong  
Former UGC Member (April 1998 - March 2002)

As an academic staff serving the Hong Kong higher education nearly 30 years, I am so glad to witness its fast and successful development. In particular, I am very impressed with the leadership and various initiatives of the UGC in steering the great transformation of the UGC-funded sector towards an internationally renowned university system with strong global competitiveness in cutting edge research, world-class education and knowledge transfer with long lasting impacts for human betterment.

As a former member, I am so proud of the excellent achievements of the UGC in making the higher education system so successful for the future of Hong Kong and the Region. I have learned a lot from the experiences in the UGC family.

May I take this opportunity to share one of my paintings to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the UGC and its tremendous accomplishments.



Relativity 15: Transformation



Professor Anne COOKE  
Former RGC Member (July 2009 - June 2015)



It has been a great privilege for me to serve on the RGC for several years. It has been very exciting to see new funding schemes rolled out and to watch the growth and development of science in Hong Kong over this time. At a time when funding has been very scarce in other countries and good science cannot always be guaranteed funding it has been very rewarding to work with an organisation where it has been the development of scientific excellence that has been the primary goal. Through judicious management of budgets the expansion of research has occurred unfettered in Hong Kong in a way that is the envy of others.

I have personally learnt an enormous amount over my time serving on various committees, met wonderful people and am deeply grateful for having been given the opportunity by the UGC to do so.





Professor Glyn DAVIS, AC  
Former UGC Member  
(January 2008 – December 2010)

It was an honour, and an education, to serve on the UGC from 2008. The work of the UGC has contributed greatly to the global standing of Hong Kong's tertiary education, and delivered important benefits to the city and its citizens. Whenever visitors meet in the office of the Vice-Chancellor at the University of Melbourne, in pride of place on the table is a beautiful "tug of war" sculpture UGC Chairwoman the Honourable Mrs Laura Cha presented at the conclusion of my term. It reminds us daily of the vitality of political debate in Hong Kong, the many talented people around the UGC table and, above all, the sense of shared purpose at the UGC to ensure Hong Kong is home to great universities.



Professor Adrian K DIXON  
UGC Member (July 2013 – Now)  
QAC Member (April 2014 – Now)

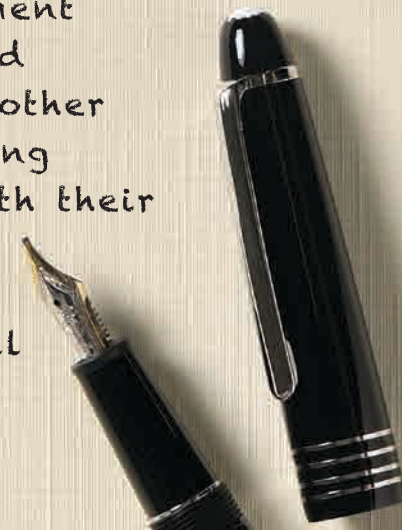


Although I am a relative newcomer to the UGC, it is readily apparent that the Universities which the UGC supports are extremely fortunate to have such safe underpinning of their institutions. Indeed, without the UGC, it is debatable whether the Hong Kong universities would currently enjoy such a highly regarded international status within the worldwide university rankings.

It is really rather remarkable that a population of around 8 000 000 supports, delivers and promotes such high-class teaching and research, and this is something that all HongKongers should be proud of. This success has been greatly assisted by the foresight of previous UGC Chairmen and their Committees, together with the endeavours of the very hard-working UGC staff.

It is also reassuring to see various new initiatives set up by the UGC promote self-improvement in many areas within the individual universities. Quite apart from the generous research grant program, which means that most productive research workers can obtain some grant income to further their work, initiatives such as the Teaching Awards have greatly helped to promote and reward excellence in teaching.

The Research Assessment Exercise provides extremely constructive external benchmarking. The Academic Development Proposal makes institutions concentrate on and redefine their aims and objectives. These and other initiatives will all help to ensure that Hong Kong universities continue to excel and continue with their development of research collaboration and educational exchanges with mainland Chinese universities and major centres elsewhere. I will enjoy watching the next 50 years of the UGC support.







Professor Sir David EASTWOOD  
UGC Member (January 2011-Now)

Hong Kong's publicly-funded higher educational system is a jewel. Eight institutions of real quality constitute not only a huge asset to the people of Hong Kong but a centre of international higher education that is critical to Hong Kong's future.

It is doubtful that the system would exist as it does, with diverse institutions, research of acknowledged international quality, and systems of learning that fuse what is best in Hong Kong's rich and diverse inheritance, without the kind of funding and oversight that the UGC has provided.

An arm's-length funder, funding through block grant, not simply respecting but helping optimise institutional autonomy, is as rare as it is valuable.

That the UGC has been able to operate so effectively owes much to its leadership, its willingness to work in partnership, its capacity to stimulate sympathetic innovation, and the complementary diversity of its membership. International members bring much, and gain much from their service to the UGC. For me it was a pleasure to be asked to join and a privilege to serve.



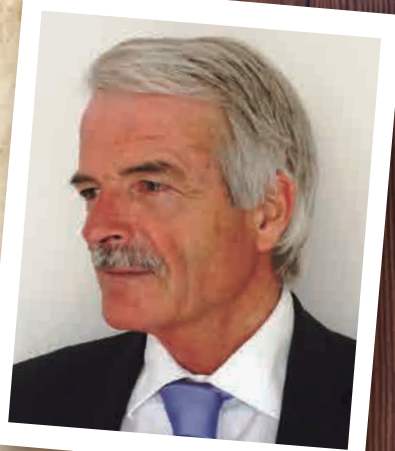
Dr Judith EATON  
Former UGC Member (April 2003 - December 2009)  
QAC Member (March 2010 - Now)

The role of the UGC in Hong Kong made service on this important body not only a privilege, but an exciting opportunity to be part of the growth and evolution of Hong Kong's colleges and universities. I learned many things while participating in the UGC, most important of which is that when Government, the public and higher education leaders are determined and committed to change, this can take place very quickly. Nowhere was this clearer than the shift from a three-year undergraduate program to a four-year undergraduate program as part of the "3+3+4" initiative. The work to be done was enormous and varied: new curricula, additional faculty, more attention to student learning outcomes, expanded student support services, more facilities and financing. And Hong Kong, the UGC and the universities succeeded. Where else and how often might we observe — much less participate in — a fundamental restructuring of this magnitude and importance? The UGC's role was vital, for two reasons. The UGC is diverse, attracting people from Hong Kong education, the professions and the business world, as well as international academics. This brought many perspectives to the undertaking. At the same time, the UGC stands for important shared values that helped drive this transition. The people who serve on the UGC are dedicated to education, sustain a profound respect for higher education, are profoundly aware of the importance of teaching and learning to society and desire to do the best that can be done for Hong Kong. It was an honour to serve with them and to be part of Hong Kong higher education.



Sir Malcolm GRANT, CBE, MA, LLD  
UGC Member (April 2007 – Now)

To the international observer, Hong Kong is an exceptional city, a bridge between East and West, freshly transitioned from its British colonial history to become part of China, but with the preservation of its separate cultures and system of governance. It has the potential to become not just a geographical and cultural crossroads but a major global player in a world economy led by scientific discovery and technological innovation. But it is not a self-evident goal: its achievement calls for political self-confidence and leadership, and truly outstanding universities. The role of the UGC, over the eight years that I have had the honour of serving as an overseas member, has been to invest in Hong Kong's public universities strategically so as to promote the highest quality of teaching and learning, and to help them develop a sense of entrepreneurship amongst their student populations. Hong Kong's economy above all needs highly skilled and flexibly educated graduates with a global vision. UGC investment has also set out to promote world-class research that runs the full spectrum from the fundamental to the applied. Success in this arena has become an important measure of, and contributed to, global economic competitiveness. We have to invest in, and continue to promote, only the very best. We should all be proud that the eight institutions supported by the UGC have made such great strides over the past decade, and that the partnership has such great potential for future continuing improvement.



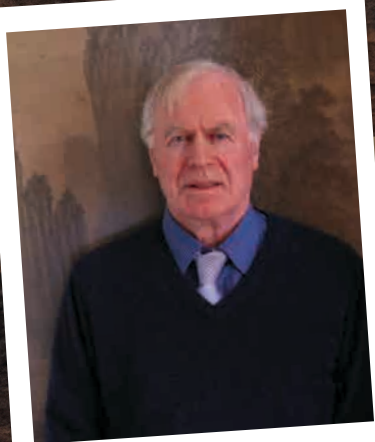
Professor Ruth HAYHOE, SBS  
Former RGC Member (May 2002 – June 2003)

It is a pleasure to join in the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Hong Kong's UGC as a past member of the RGC. Though I served only briefly, I have reviewed many education proposals and seen how the grants of the RGC and the input of scholarly assessors from all over the world have made possible the blossoming of high quality research. One significant theme that stimulated a flow of books and articles from RGC grants has been the "Chinese learner" or the learner in Confucian heritage societies. Stereotypes about passivity, rote memorisation and the absence of creativity have been dispelled and fascinating insights into the learning process have reached a global community intrigued by student success in East Asia.

I would also like to express gratitude to the UGC as president emerita of the Hong Kong Institute of Education. While heading this fledgling institution as it was transformed from a group of small teachers colleges within the Education Department into an independent degree granting institution, I received crucially helpful guidance from the Chairman, Secretary-General and distinguished local and international members. I was the only woman heading a UGC-funded institution in those years, and an unforgettable moment was the first time I faced another woman across the table at the regular meetings with presidents of Hong Kong's eight tertiary institutions. That was Dr Alice Lam, who was appointed Chairman in 1999 and served with great distinction until 2007. Her outstanding leadership broke one more stereotype about Confucian heritage societies!







Professor Christopher HOWE, MBE  
Former UGC Member (January 1974 - December 1990)  
Former RGC Member (June 1987 - June 1999)

I was on research leave in Hong Kong during 1965-1966. What sort of place was it? And what did this mean for the newly established UGC?

For colonial expatriates, life was good. Hong Kong was efficient, inexpensive, and flourishing. The pound bought HK\$16, when the Star ferry was 10 cents; a made to measure suit HK\$300; and dinner for eight at the North China Restaurant (the best) cost HK\$160. One could play tennis at the South China or Ladies Recreation Club, and by hiring the Hilton's brigantine (well named the *Wan Fu* - 'ten thousand happinesses'), one could sail all evening, carousing and swimming safely at remote island locations.

Unsurprisingly, with exceptions, Hong Kong was not somewhere to look for world class academic research.

The Government responsible for this thriving society was very colonial. The Governor worked under authority of the Sovereign, through the Colonial Office in London, taking advice from his Executive and Legislative Councils, on which there were no elected members. Administration was under the Colonial Secretariat, although the legendary Financial Secretary, John (later Sir John) Cowperthwaite as the most influential man in Government. The general culture was authoritarian. No officer could leave Hong Kong without permission; those who performed poorly or stepped out of line were re-assigned to dull jobs, or even banished to London; and local marriage was frowned upon. An academic who criticised policy was once threatened with being 'put on the first plane out'.

Why then did the Government agree to establish a British style institution whose role and informal systems were so at variance with its own ethos? The answer is that whereas for years the Government had resisted HKU's demands for more finance, the arrival of CUHK in 1963 meant funds would now have to be divided. This was a technical and political quagmire that even John Cowperthwaite preferred to side step.

The Committee's success in establishing credibility and working methods was largely due to its remarkable first Chairman, Michael (later Sir Michael) Herries, and its second Secretary, SF 'Bill' Bailey, who served from 1967 to 1980. Bill's enthusiasm, his industry, and his commitment simply had no bounds. Also, being on contract, he could be dismissed but not re-assigned, an advantage later Secretaries did not share.

The major academic problem for the first Committee was the huge disparity between HKU and the new CUHK. HKU recruited from the best schools, had graduates in the best jobs, an Island location, and its famous Medical School. CUHK had none of this. At the invitation of Li Choh-ming (VC), I taught a course at Chung Chi College in the Spring Semester of 1966. The journey from mid levels took three and a half hours, after which one arrived at an idyllic, water filled valley, with a famous floating restaurant, but otherwise hardly a building in sight. Students were enthusiastic, but not as prepared as those at HKU. The university was basically still under construction, with its administrative offices remaining in Kowloon.

By the time Choh-ming retired in 1978, at the UPGC party for him we could honestly say that he, his staff, and many generous private donors, had made a success of it all.

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to the late Sir John Cowperthwaite and the family of the late SF Bailey, CBE, for their generous help.



**Professor Mette HJORT**  
UGC Member (April 2013 - Now)

A local member of the UGC, recruited from one of its eight institutions, I participate in the work of the UGC in a "personal capacity". Being involved in the work of the UGC as a local university teacher and researcher has been a great privilege in so many different ways. The UGC plays a very big role in the life of any academic working at one of its eight institutions, and yet, as the body that holds the purse strings and effects change and policy formation through the allocation of funding, it is, oftentimes, not entirely well understood.

It is easy to see only a body that issues directives, and to fail to catch sight of the dedication, commitment, even idealism, that lie behind many of the initiatives. My fondest memories of my involvement with the UGC have to do with very specific initiatives that make the UGC's incredible commitment to its institutions, and more importantly, to the teachers and researchers within them, very tangible. One example is the UGC-commissioned TVB documentary focusing on the UGC institutions' success with Knowledge Transfer. Christine Au, then with the UGC Secretariat, brought extraordinary enthusiasm, intelligence, and generosity to the project, and, watching the documentary during one of the UGC's meetings, it was impossible not to feel a great deal of gratitude for the work that the Secretariat does.

The UGC's involvement not merely in funding but also mounting the Hong Kong Pavilion is another example of UGC's policies and provisions finding a human dimension. The effort that the Secretary General, Dr Richard Armour, and Christine Au, put into the NAFSA meeting in San Diego (2014) was quite extraordinary, as was the energy that was devoted to meeting with organisations, San Diego Connect amongst them, that might have some guidance to offer with respect to issues and concerns being discussed by the UGC. I wish the UGC a very "happy anniversary".



**Professor Nancy Y IP**  
Former RGC Member (July 2003 - June 2006)

Since its inception, the UGC has had a remarkable impact on Hong Kong's research environment, from its significant efforts in supporting visionary projects to its contributions towards developing local universities into world-class institutions. Initiatives such as the Area of Excellence and the Theme-based Research Schemes have increased the breadth of innovative research undertaken in Hong Kong, helped develop new technologies and state-of-the-art facilities, and fostered collaborative research efforts among local institutions, while enhancing the overall research culture in Hong Kong.

It has been my pleasure and honour to play a part in UGC's efforts. Serving as a member on the Medical Sub-Committee of the UGC (2001-04) and the Biology and Medicine Panel of the RGC (2003-06), I have witnessed the impact of the UGC's mission and successful implementation efforts to create a dynamic research environment. This has been very visible through the top-notch projects selected for funding by the UGC, many of which have achieved international excellence and enhanced Hong Kong's image as a research hub.

The UGC's steadfast support over the past 50 years has helped Hong Kong's universities move from strength to strength towards world-class status, and reach parity with other prestigious international institutes around the world. The importance of remaining competitive and excelling further remains a top priority, though. With the on-going support of the UGC, the spirit of innovation will continue to thrive as new research avenues are developed to push the frontiers of knowledge.







Dr KAM Pok-man  
UGC Member (April 2013 – Now)



My involvement in the UGC over the last two years has enlightened me on the higher education sector in Hong Kong. At the UGC, we are very fortunate to have a very committed and forward looking Chairman, and a group of world renowned academics, who have devoted a significant amount of their time advising the Government on the strategic development and funding of the sector.

Our UGC-funded institutions are both globally focused and locally committed to nurture high quality graduates. They have successfully developed their self-financing arms to complement the UGC-funded sector. They are also successful in attracting the best students from the Mainland and around the world. Furthermore, the recent RAE exercise has witnessed the high quality of their research performance.

Our challenges going forward are not only to facilitate our institutions to continuously improve their research performance and to pursue their goal for international recognition, but also to encourage them to enhance their teaching quality, and to promote more collaboration among institutions.

As a professional accountant, I am pleased to be able to contribute, in a small part, to implement the recommendations of the Financial Affairs Working Group Report by providing technical expertise and advice on drawing up appropriate guidelines for institutions to improve their cost allocation practices and to enhance their financial transparency.

Happy 50th Anniversary!



Mr Irving KOO, SBS, JP  
Former UGC Member (April 2003 – March 2009)



My first ever encounter with the UGC, or the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) as it was then known, took place some forty five years ago, while I was a senior-year student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. At that time, the UPGC was chaired by Sir Michael Young-Herris. That two years later, I was to become a junior member of the sprawling business empire of which he was Chairman is quite another story. That meeting, which was also attended by student representatives of other UPGC institutions, left me with a positive and lasting impression.

In particular, that the Hong Kong Government, by design, entrusted the allocation of public funds for higher education to an independent committee with appointed local and overseas members was a revelation to me. Years later, successive government appointments put me on a path that was to be intertwined with the systemic development and reform of Hong Kong education at all levels of the local school system. Joining the UGC in 2003 was thus the "crowning glory" of my public service "career", with the spectrum of my experience in education now complete. As a member of the UGC, I was now able to verify as well as to add substance to that first impression from decades back.

To my mind, the UGC system which is characterised by international benchmarking, role differentiation among higher-education institutions, collegial peer review and relevance to local community needs, is on the whole both effective and equitable. As an impartial conduit between the Government and the universities, the UGC also contributes significantly to the overall mechanism by which the vital values of academic freedom and institutional autonomy are safeguarded. I wish the UGC continued success as it celebrates its 50th Anniversary.



Professor Gabriel M LEUNG, GBS, JP  
UGC Member (January 2014 - Now)

The UGC's golden jubilee offers a welcome opportunity to reflect on the many achievements of Hong Kong's institutions of higher learning. Together they are the essence of what the academic community — students, teachers and administrators — has collectively created for this city, and very much beyond.

50 years ago Hong Kong had only two universities. Today it boasts more than two dozen tertiary institutions, eight of which are directly and mostly supported by the UGC. Back during the UGC's early years, two per cent of students could go on to higher education locally. 70 per cent, almost a quarter of whom directly supported by the UGC, will be admitted this September to post-secondary education. The superlative quality of locally generated research has recently been reaffirmed through the rigorous 2014 Research Assessment Exercise, where 12% of the research submissions made by the eight UGC-funded institutions were adjudicated as of "world leading" standard, 34% attained "international excellence" and the remainder overwhelmingly reached "international or regional standing".

These simple but fundamental statistics are testament to how far the local tertiary sector has come during the past 50 years with the UGC's support. Yet the art of learning is long. It requires constant nurturing and an accelerated effort to stay ahead of the very fast moving advance of national and global developments. There are an increasing number of fields of enquiry that become unrecognisable within a few short years. Our responsibility as guardians of the SAR's higher learning sector is to facilitate our people, professors and students alike, to adapt to and to lead in this ever changing knowledge ecoscape.

There is a set of principles that must however remain unyielding. Hong Kong's universities owe our very success to the twinned premises of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. They are guaranteed under the Basic Law, which is in turn celebrating 25 years since its promulgation. These principles have afforded us the latitude for unfettered growth to sustain communities of freely enquiring minds, from which greatness emerges.

May the next 50 years of the UGC be as impactful on Hong Kong's knowledge sector as it has been in the past half century. For its pivotal role in helping universities and colleges grow and thrive, I salute this unsung hero that works behind the scenes for students, researchers and teachers.



Dr Eddy LI Sau-hung, BBS, JP  
Former UGC Member (April 1999 — March 2001)

As a former member of the UGC, I am fully aware of the heavy burden of the Government in supporting higher education, especially for local students. As for the future of Hong Kong's higher education sector, I do see two potential directions of development:

The first is to increase the number of private colleges or educational institutes, which normally assume sole responsibility for their profits or losses. These are usually famous international schools of certain disciplines, and they are beneficial to our city because they will provide more places in universities, bring diversity to our educational system, attract worldwide elites including both professors and students, and alleviate the burden of the Government. With more elites cultivated in this case, Hong Kong will enjoy a more promising prospect.

The second is to involve the business circle in higher education. The business circle demands a wealth of talent resources, and is willing to help fresh-grads adapt to society. The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong, for example, is more than happy to provide opportunities for graduates to increase work experience, widen their knowledge about the markets in different industries, or even start a career. Every year, the Hong Kong Brands and Products Expo holds events for adolescents to participate in. Overseas trips of student groups are also occasionally organised to broaden their vision. These show the feasibility of deeper and more intensive cooperation between industries and academic institutions.

