

**The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Inauguration Ceremony
4 September 2023**

Welcome address to new students

by the Vice-Chancellor and President
Professor Rocky S. Tuan

Good morning, new students!

A very warm welcome to The Chinese University of Hong Kong, your new home! I am delighted to speak to you on this important day marking the official beginning of what I am sure will be an exciting, and hopefully, the most rewarding journey in your life.

You are joining us in a truly special year, one that holds remarkable significance for both CUHK and Hong Kong. This is the year we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the University! As new members of CUHK, all of you will play a vital part in our celebrations. I look forward to your active participation in our anniversary activities as well as your contributions to our continuous pursuit of excellence, building on CUHK's proud legacy now spanning six decades.

The Diamond Jubilee represents a timely and precious occasion for us to commemorate our rich heritage and achievements, as turning sixty symbolises the birth of a new cycle in Chinese culture. 2023 also happens to be the year our city has emerged from the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and has now fully reopened to the world. This is a year of rejuvenation; a year of new opportunities; and a year of boundless possibilities. I hope that the unique learning experience at CUHK will ably equip you as leaders and change-makers of tomorrow, so that you can play a bigger part in shaping the future of Hong Kong, our nation, and the world, at this most exciting juncture of the 21st century.



I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you my thoughts on a very important and relevant topic - Future of work.

On this first day of the new academic year, I will refrain from telling you how new technologies and artificial intelligence is revolutionising our lives, because I am sure that your expertise as young digital natives will certainly eclipse my own! In this unprecedented era of disruption sparked by the rise of automation and artificial intelligence, all of you have an opportunity to shape your future lives in ways that even just a few years ago would never have seemed possible.

The rise of big data, connectivity, machine learning, and a lot more has brought us to an era of advanced digital technology, also known as Industry 4.0 or 4IR, which refers to the Fourth Industrial Revolution driven by artificial intelligence. Other than transforming human lives, technology also holds the promise of resolving some of the world's most pressing issues, like climate change and energy crisis. With the global AI industry estimated to grow at a remarkable rate of 33.6% annually from now until 2028, we cannot afford to lower our guard against what these technologies will potentially mean for the way we work.

According to the Future of Jobs Report 2023 released at the World Economic Forum held in May this year, almost a quarter of all jobs globally will change in the next five years – meaning that 83 million jobs across 45 economies are expected to be eliminated, with a sizeable amount of an average human manager's workload being replaced by AI, virtual assistants and chatbots either currently or in the near future. As for Hong Kong, a recent report has pointed to a worrying fact that that our city faces the highest risk of workforce automation among major global economies, mainly because of the high dependency on the financial sector of our economy.

In the face of this existential challenge for human workers kindled by technological advancement, we must retain our comparative advantage over machines through reskilling and upskilling, focusing on the characteristics and qualities that make us unique as humans, hence, irreplaceable. University education will prepare you for this. Try your best to seize the countless opportunities for whole-person development we offer through the formal curriculum and non-formal learning activities arranged by our nine Colleges and other units to reinforce the core human skills that will empower you to wisely utilise technology for the benefits of society. Focus on developing your creativity, critical thinking, decision-making, collaboration, and emotional intelligence – for these are the skills that are indispensable and something which even the strongest AI will find very difficult or even impossible to replicate.



Enjoy the privilege of being CUHK undergraduates by considering joining our signature co-operative education programme, *Co-op@CUHK*, which is the first of its kind in Hong Kong. The preparatory courses, capacity-building activities and full-time work placements in different sectors offered by the programme are sure to help you bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace demands in the 21st century.

While the threat of AI and the future of work are both in fact matters of here and now, never lose faith in a bright tomorrow. History has told us repeatedly that when some human roles in the workplace are replaced by technology, new ones are very likely to appear. Many jobs much spoken of these days, like social listeners, Fintech specialists, and green economists, did not even exist a decade or so ago. This tells us that despite the uncertainty posed by new technologies, they present unimaginable possibilities for people who are equipped with the skills to thrive.

Social responsibility

CUHK was founded with a mission to combine tradition with modernity and to bring together China and the West, which is the guiding light anchoring everything we do. As one of the most internationalised universities located in Hong Kong, Asia's World City, CUHK is blessed with direct access to the

mainland as well as strong international connectivity. Today, as you formally become a member of the CUHK community, you all arrive with an opportunity and a responsibility to learn about the rich and complex history of our country and its development in the modern era, increase your awareness of national security and cultivate a strong sense of national identity from the abundant courses and experiences we have on offer. Open yourselves to the myriad of opportunities that the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has created and prepare yourselves to contribute to national progress as well as a sustainable future of the world.

We live in a highly connected global community, where countries and regions are more dependent on each other than ever before. Every action we take and every choice we make could have far-reaching impact that extends beyond our local community. Humanity is confronted by burning sustainable development issues that require global attention and action, such as climate change, affordable and clean energy, health and well-being, poverty, and inequalities. Embrace social responsibility and think about how your decisions would affect others and the world around you. I hope CUHK's vibrant campus, bringing together people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, as well as the multiple local and cross-border experiential learning programmes will enable you to develop a global outlook so that you will become constructive agents with the power to make a positive difference to the world, both individually and collectively.

Dear students, once again, welcome to CUHK and thank you for fueling us with your fresh perspectives and limitless potential. I love a saying by the highly admired and venerated Catholic monk, Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan Order, who said, "Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible!" The Confucian classic *Book of Rites* also rightly describes the essence of learning, "學然後知不足 - to learn is to encounter one's own ignorance and acknowledge one's own deficiencies". It takes tremendous effort, dedication and perseverance to transform your aspirations into reality. The first day of the academic year is the perfect moment for you to set new goals and devise a roadmap to provide direction to your efforts. Stay curious, keep learning and adopt a growth mindset. Seek support from your family, teachers and peers who can provide you with the guidance, encouragement and advice you will need in times of setbacks. Remember, resilience is what drives you forward and helps you create the future you desire.

May you shine bright and be filled with new energies and hopes to embrace new experiences and learn things you never knew before. I wish you a fulfilling and transformative journey at CUHK.

Thank you.