

**The Chinese University of Hong Kong
94th Congregation for the Presentation of
Doctoral, Master's and Bachelor's Degrees**

17 November 2024

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

Council Chairman, distinguished guests, dear graduates, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning and welcome!

It gives me great honour to address you on this important day for Class 2024 – probably one of the most pivotal moments in the lives of all of you who are graduating today, as it celebrates years of hard work and commitment to self-realisation. This ceremony is often known as the commencement ceremony, for it marks the beginning of a new journey for you.

A few days ago, Typhoon Toraji struck Hong Kong, forcing the university to suspend the Congregation that day to ensure the safety of all members and guests. This sudden change reminded us that life is unpredictable, and challenges and obstacles are inevitable. The postponement of the ceremony might be a test of our patience, but I am truly grateful for my colleagues who demonstrated exceptional professionalism and put in extra effort and hard work. Without their contributions, we would not have been able to make all the necessary arrangements in just a few days, allowing graduates and their families and friends to share this wonderful moment together. Kudos to their dedication and commitment! I also want to express my appreciation for the understanding and cooperation of all the graduates and guests.

I stand before you with great pride, and also a profound sense of nostalgia, as I am delivering my final speech at the Congregation as the Vice-Chancellor and President of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. It has given me much privilege and joy to serve this esteemed institution over the past seven years, to witness your transformation, and to see the University's noble mission – to combine tradition with modernity, and to bring together China and the West – shine brightly on both the national and global stages. At this emotional moment, I would like to share some thoughts that I hope will prepare and lead you through the gateway to the future.

Graduation is not only a time for retrospection, when you commemorate your years of hard work and accomplishments at the University, but it is also a time for introspection, to think deeply about how your thoughts, attitudes and behaviour will guide you in making decisions about career, interpersonal relationships, and many other aspects of life. While life is like a voyage where challenges and setbacks are inevitable, I urge all of you to carry with you the following five V's (V is of course also the Roman numeral for 5!) – which highlight the qualities I believe you have cultivated at CUHK that will serve you well as you prepare to face life's complexities.

1. Vigour

No matter what your future holds, you will soon realise that life does not get easier as you grow older. You need to get stronger in the face of adversity, in order to overcome every obstacle that comes your way with vigour, which refers not only to physical energy to bounce back, but also resilience to handle tough times and determination to hang on to your dreams and keep going.

Everyone of us in Hong Kong celebrated a season of triumphs and breakthroughs by our city's delegation at the Paris Olympics and Paralympics this summer. We were very proud to see members of the CUHK community compete in the Games too. Our Juris Doctor student Vivian Kong claimed the landmark Olympic Gold Medal in women's épée fencing. Our student athlete and para-badminton player, Chu Man-kai, and CUHK's honorary fellow, master's alumna and veteran fencer, Alison Yu Chui-yee, impressed us with their exceptional display of willpower throughout the Games. Full of vim and vigour, they are shining examples who have shown us how embracing challenges with courage and resolve can propel us forward.

2. Virtue

The University's motto, "*Through Learning and Temperance to Virtue*", encapsulates the core value of CUHK education being a way to deepen your understanding of ethical principles which guide you to exercise self-control in order to become virtuous members of society.

In a world where artificial intelligence increasingly wields power, you will constantly be faced with dilemmas and temptations that challenge your beliefs and test your integrity. I would like to borrow the words of our former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ambrose King, as he explained the Way of Great Learning: "While science and technology are crucial elements of a modern civilisation, developing its future requires both intelligence and virtue." Apply the critical thinking skills you have cultivated and acquired at CUHK and display a strong moral compass in all your choices so that your actions will leave a positive impact on the world around you.

3. Venture

Your graduation marks the beginning of your venture into the unknown. In an ever-changing world where competition is intense, you need to develop an innovative mindset to adapt to changes and set you apart.

Last December, the entire CUHK community was saddened by the passing of Professor Tang Xiao'ou, one of the most influential scientists in the field of AI who had forged an unbreakable bond with the University spanning a quarter of a century. As the founder of SenseTime, CUHK's first home-grown unicorn, Professor Tang fostered a "black sheep culture" at the company, emphasising the importance of being a different kind of sheep – a black sheep – who dares to be different and dares to innovate. He held dear the belief that AI is about creating things that do not exist yet. This enterprising spirit and outside-the-box thinking is what will distinguish you from those who follow conventional paths and open up new avenues.

4. Vision

At CUHK, diversity is not just a buzzword, but a shared value among our community, in which all individuals are respected for who they are, and what they can do, to build a vibrant academic environment where everyone can flourish and reach their full potential. When everyone is empowered to do their part, we can do great things.

The Father of Fibre Optics, Nobel Laureate in Physics, and former Vice-Chancellor of CUHK, Professor Charles Kao, left us with a meaningful quote about doing great things – "The greatest achievements in life are those that make a positive difference in the world."

I urge you to channel the strong sense of social responsibility the CUHK eco-system has instilled in you to taking practical actions that create positive change in the world around you. Engage with diverse communities; participate in volunteer work; or advocate for sustainable practices and other important causes. Remember, making a big difference always starts with small actions.

5. Vibrancy

Finally, appreciate the vibrancy of life. Prioritise your physical and mental wellness and cherish the friendships and networks you have built during your time at CUHK. Your achievement today would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of your families, teachers and friends. It is the same loving encouragement and ongoing support of these people who have been standing by your side that will help you navigate the ups and downs in life and grow into better persons. Harness the robust CUHK alumni networks, local and offshore, to remain closely connected to your alma mater.

Congratulations to Honorary Graduates

Ladies and gentlemen, as we have come together to celebrate the achievements of students who have completed their Doctoral, Master's or Bachelor's programme at CUHK, we are also here to acknowledge four outstanding individuals who were conferred Honorary Graduates by the University for their distinguished contributions in their own professional field. Please join me in giving a round of applause to Professor Victor Joseph Dzau, *Doctor of Science, honoris causa*, Professor Nancy Jane Rothwell, *Doctor of Laws, honoris causa*, Dr Carlson Tong Ka-shing, *Doctor of Social Science, honoris causa*, and Dr Deng Xiaohua, *Doctor of Literature, honoris causa*. Please accept our heartfelt congratulations on receiving the well-deserved honour. The CUHK community is extremely delighted to forge stronger bonds with our distinguished Honorary Alumni!

Conclusion

I mentioned earlier that this is the last time I speak at the Congregation as the Vice-Chancellor of CUHK. As I reminisce about the more than 2,500 days I have spent at the University, my heart swells with great pride and thankfulness. I am proud of the spirit of excellence that defines the CUHK community and deeply grateful for the dedication of all University members empowering us to scale new heights. In fact, I am sure you are interested to know that this year CUHK has secured its historically highest international ranking in 3 major global university rankings, and also in Asia university rankings, placing CUHK securely as a top-50 university of the world, a truly impressive testimony to the outstanding achievements of the CUHK community. CUHK has also successfully launched and established significant and strategic research and academic collaborations with many outstanding Mainland and international partners, thus playing a critical role as a superconductor and fulfilling an important part of our mission – To Bring Together China and the West (or the World). I would like to express my deep gratitude to all members of the CUHK community, who have made these accomplishments possible.

Dear graduates, as you are about to begin a new journey of personal growth, let the knowledge you have acquired and the memories we have shared at CUHK be your guiding lights. Forge your path towards excellence with purpose and responsibility and shape a bright future for our community, our country and the world.

To conclude, let me borrow the beautiful words of the Irish and share this prayer with all of you:

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home.

And may the land of a friend always be near.

May green be the grass you walk on.

May blue be the skies above you.

May pure be the joys that surround you.

And may true be the hearts that love you.

Finally, may you spread your wings and soar high. Thank you.