

President's Address 校長講辭

Mr Council Chairman, distinguished guests, colleagues, parents, graduates, ladies and gentlemen:

I have been in office for nearly 14 months, time enough to get to know the University's history, realities and priorities. For instance, I have discovered to my delight that historically, Lingnan University in Guangzhou was among the best universities in China, once considered the best in the South and rivalled only by Peking University in the North. We were the standard bearer of academic excellence in the country. As a consequence of educational reform in China, Lingnan University ceased to operate as an independent entity in 1952, but was reestablished in Hong Kong 15 years later by its visionary and dedicated alumni from the Guangzhou era. This proud past is both inspiring and humbling, urging us on to build our University as an internationally recognised liberal arts institution.

Today, I want to speak from the heart, about what I have seen and learned, about the promise of this unique university and the present situation in Hong Kong. As you know, Lingnan students have been involved in the debate over Hong Kong's constitutional and electoral reform. As an educator, my duty is to see that this social participation has positive educational value for our students. Whatever the eventual outcome of this debate, we can all learn and grow with the experience. I had been young once, and know how endearing youthful passion and ideals can be. Some of our students have taken part in street demonstrations. I admire their courage. They have been on my mind and in my heart. So I would like to speak freely about things that matter to students, to this university and to our society, for what happens to young people today will determine what society will become tomorrow.

Against this background, two related questions are uppermost in my mind: How well have we prepared our students for life in society? What are we educating them to be?

Some of you may be familiar with the ten personal qualities of a liberally educated person identified by Professor William Cronon in his 1998 article in *The American Scholar*. His list may be seen as a modern version of lasting values embraced by different cultures through the ages. I believe some of the qualities he has identified are essential to us, if we want to make Lingnan a proud centre of liberal arts education in Hong Kong and across Asia.

The university is a place of special privilege and purpose. With this privilege comes the moral duty to uphold and respect the diversity of views that flourish within the university community. This means that while we express our views with passion and conviction, we should always respect the right of others to hold views different from our own.

In fact, the ability to listen, to hear contrary views, and to empathise tops Professor Cronon's list of personal qualities of the liberally educated person. Hong Kong's present predicament may be partly attributable to an inability or unwillingness to listen on both sides of the political divide. The ability to be a good listener presupposes humility, tolerance, and self-criticism, another personal quality underlined by Professor Cronon.

President's Address 校長講辭

I have read in the newspapers that many university students in Hong Kong dare not speak their mind, because they are worried about being harassed by vocal students who hold different views. I hope this does not happen at Lingnan, because that would be a betrayal of the ideal we live by, the very basis of liberal arts education itself.

I would therefore like to appeal to our students and graduates, whatever your social or political persuasions, to embrace humility throughout your life. These days, too many people are too quick to criticise others without first knowing the basic facts, reasoning through their assumptions and carefully examining the evidence.

We come to the university for knowledge, for personal discovery and growth, and ultimately for the purpose of serving the world. We come to discover ourselves, our passion and our dreams. Socrates said more than 2,500 years ago that “an unexamined life is not worth living”. For our own sake, and that of Lingnan and the wider world, we should be prepared to examine our conduct and beliefs from time to time, and ask ourselves the following questions: Are our views informed and supported by evidence? Are we skipping inconvenient facts we don't like, or influenced by biases or preconceptions? Among other things, a liberally educated person is an independent and self-critical thinker.

One quality not explicitly mentioned by Professor Cronon is global outlook and orientation. It is my belief that this quality is vital to humanity in the interconnected world of the 21st century. Recently, there was a sobering observation by a former Western journalist who has been living for decades in Hong Kong. He said that for all our reputation as an international city, our people, including our young people, well-educated or otherwise, are often too self-absorbed and unconcerned with the world beyond our immediate circle, let alone what lies beyond our borders. Some former Hong Kong residents go so far as to say that our tastes, passions, and concerns have become rather parochial, and our students hardly speak English socially or functionally at a level that befits an international city.

I hope these criticisms are untrue, but if they contain elements of truth, it could be a dangerous situation in a fast-globalising world. The essence of education is a continuous extension beyond ourselves, beyond our immediate little world—to an interest in others, to things and people beyond our personal and political boundaries. This is why I am proud of our international exchange programmes, which enable more than half of our students to go abroad to learn about other cultures and societies. These programmes, along with our community outreach and internship programmes, are an important part of liberal arts education.

As president, I call upon our students and alumni to practise mutual respect and humility, and go beyond interests dictated by proximity. If we are serious about making Lingnan an internationally recognised liberal arts institution that reflects our University's past greatness and future advancement, the entire Lingnan community must work together to foster these and other values that are not only essential for

President's Address 校長講辭

personal happiness and fulfillment, but also indispensable to Hong Kong as a vibrant international city.

We congregate to celebrate an important rite of passage for our students. I congratulate our graduates on their most emotional day at Lingnan. You, your family and teachers have put in so much to get you to this point. This day belongs to you and to them all. Be proud that you come from Lingnan. Whatever may happen in the world outside, this will always be your second home. May you go far and fly high. Today, you may cry tears of joy and nostalgia as you leave. Tomorrow, Lingnan is ready to hear good news from her sons and daughters. We are, and always will be, one family.

Thank you.

President's Address 校長講辭

校董會主席、各位嘉賓、同事、家長、畢業同學、各界朋友：

我已在任接近14個月，這段日子足以讓我認識嶺南大學的歷史、實況和事情的輕重先後。譬如說，我欣然發現在歷史中的廣州嶺大，曾是中國最優秀學府之一，一度被視為南方的最佳學府，只有北方的北京大學可堪媲美；當時我們是全國卓越學術水平的表表者。由於國內推行教育改革，嶺大於1952年停止獨立運作。然而，在一群具遠見卓識且充滿熱忱的廣州年代校友的共同努力下，嶺大於15年後在香港復校。這段值得自豪的過去既激勵人心，又令人謙卑省察，驅策我們把大學建立成一所國際稱譽的博雅教育學府。

今天，我以摯誠的心與大家分享所見所聞，談談這所獨特的大學的指望，以及香港的現況。大家知道，嶺大同學一直參與有關本港政制和選舉制度改革的討論。作為教育工作者，我的責任是確保這類社會活動參與，為我校同學帶來正面的教育價值。無論討論最終結果如何，我們都可從經驗中學習和成長。我亦曾年輕過，明白年輕人的激情和理想有多貼心。有些同學曾經參與上街示威，我欣賞這種勇氣，心中亦顧念他們。所以，我希望暢所欲言地談及對同學們、嶺大和本港社會重要的事情，因為明天的社會狀況，取決於年輕人今天的經歷。

在這個處境下，有兩個相關的問題縈繞着我的腦際：我們有沒有讓學生做好踏足社會的準備？我們正在培育他們成為怎樣的人？

在座可能有人熟悉William Cronon教授於1998年在*The American Scholar*撰寫的文章，當中指出一個領受博雅教育者的十項個人素質。他所臚列的素質，可以視作不同文化歷來持守之價值的現代版本。假如我們希望把嶺大打造成香港以至全亞洲最出色的博雅教育中心，我認為他所指出的素質之中，有部分是不可或缺的。

大學是享有特殊禮遇和具有特殊目標的地方。隨著特殊禮遇而來的是維持和尊重大學社群內百花齊放的道德責任，意即我們懷着激情和信念表達意見的同時，也應當尊重別人持有不同意見的權利。

事實上，在Cronon教授看來，能夠聽取、聆聽相反意見而將心比心，正是一個領受博雅教育者應有的個人素質中的首要一項。香港目前面對的困境，有部分可以歸因於政治分界線兩邊皆未能夠或不願意聽取對方的意見。要做稱職的聆聽者，先要具備Cronon教授強調的另一項個人素質——謙遜、忍耐和自我批評。

從報章上得知，本港許多大學生都不敢說出心底話，因為擔心會遭受持不同意見的謾罵學生滋擾，希望嶺大不會出現如此情況，因為這樣有違我們抱持的理想，亦即博雅教育本身的基礎。

因此，我籲請各位同學和畢業生，不論你們抱持着甚麼社會或政治信念，一生中都要謙遜待人。如今許多人急於批評別人，卻不首先弄清事情的真相，反思自己的假設，並仔細審視證據。

我們入讀大學，為的是求取知識、了解自己及不斷成長，最終達至為世界服務的目標。我們來這裡為的是認識自己，了解自己的鍾愛和夢想。蘇格拉底於2,500多年前曾說：「未經檢視的人生，並不值得經歷」。為了我們自己、為了嶺大、為了更大的世界，我們都應作好準備，不時檢視自己的品行和信念，撫心自問：我們的看法是否建基於事

President's Address 校長講辭

實，並有確據支持？我們是否略過不合自己心意的事實，或者受種種偏見或成見影響？領受博雅教育者，是獨立而自我批評的思想家。

Cronon教授並無明確提及的一項素質，是國際視野和取向。我認為這項素質，是二十一世紀互相結連的世界裡人類所必不可缺的。最近，一位居港數十年而曾任記者的西方人士，提出了一點發人深省的觀察。他說香港雖被譽為國際城市，但香港人（包括受過良好教育與否的年輕人），往往過於自我迷戀，對自己生活圈子以外的事物漠不關心，遑論香港以外的事情。一些往日的香港居民甚至指出，香港人的品味、鍾愛和關心已變得相當狹隘，而香港學生的社交英語或功能英語水平，與國際城市之名並不相稱。

我希望這些批評並不符合事實，但設若情況果有幾分真實，香港會在迅速一體化的世界中面臨危機。教育的精要在於不斷延展，跨越自我和自己的小天地，對自己的個人和政治界線以外的人與事產生興趣。正因為這樣，我以嶺大的國際交流計劃為榮，它讓逾半數同學前往外地學習，認識其他社會和文化。大學的國際交流連同社區外展和實習課程，都是博雅教育的重要組成部分。

作為校長，我呼籲同學和校友們以謙和的態度彼此尊重，超越目下的利益。假若我們要矢志把嶺大打造成一所國際賞譽的博雅學府，彰顯我們過往的成就和未來的發展，整個嶺大社群必須同心協力，培養上述以及其他價值，因為這些價值不僅對個人快樂和滿足感必不可少，同時對於香港作為一個生氣勃勃的國際城市亦不可或缺。

今天我們聚首一堂，為同學們慶祝一件人生大事。這是畢業同學在嶺大感受至深的日子，讓我獻上衷心的祝賀。同學們所以有今天，有賴你們自己、家人和師長的努力，所以這一天是屬於你們和他們每一位的。你們要以在嶺大畢業為榮。不論外面的世界發生甚麼事情，這裡永遠是你們的第二個家。祝願你們翱翔邁遠！今天，臨別依依，你們可能會欣喜而泣，也可能帶著懷念的離緒；明天，嶺大準備迎接子女們的好消息。現在，將來，我們永遠都是一家人。

謝謝各位。