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By MIMI CHAU

THE opening of Lingnan College's new campus in Tuen Mun last week marks an important stage in the college's development and is a significant step towards its goal of becoming a fully residential liberal arts university.

More than 800 guests attended the official opening of the campus by Governor Chris Patten.

Mr Patten said the opening provided the ideal opportunity for the institute to renew the pledge made by the founders of Lingnan College over 100 years ago to "provide education for service".

"This opening also underlines the commitment of the Government and the community to ensure that opportunities to benefit from advanced education are extended ever more widely through this territory," he said.

He stressed the new campus' importance in assisting the college to achieve its objective of becoming a residential liberal arts university.

Mr Patten said that the growth of a decent, civilised community depended on the understanding of its citizens, and on their ability and willingness to work together.

"A liberal education fosters that understanding, develops ability and encourages that open disposition so valuable to personal and social growth," he added.

The college president, Professor Edward Chen Kwan-yiu, emphasised the institute wanted to achieve self-accreditation status and designation as a university in the near future.

"We also plan to develop as an internationally recognised liberal arts university with a balance in its curriculum between professional subjects and general education which will provide the core of the courses offered by our three faculties - arts, business and social sciences," he said.

The new campus will be fully residential, with hostel places for all of its more than 2,000 students.

"This residential provision, which will be unique in the tertiary education sector of Hong Kong, has been planned to enable us to reinforce the college's ethos of 'education for service' by providing our students with the experience of living and working together," said Professor Chen.

The $800 million campus is built on a site of approximately 8.6 hectares on the north side of Tuen Mun in the New Territories.

The Hong Kong Government granted the land for the campus and a $565 million building fund.

The Jockey Club Charities Trust and private individuals and foundations also contributed.

The college is trying to raise a further $86 million to complete construction of its planned campus by the end of this year.

"I am confident this aspiration will be realised, extending the benefit that Lingnan gives to the community," said Professor Chen.