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Incubating service leaders at Lingnan University

As a liberal arts university that promotes whole-person development in Hong Kong, Lingnan University (Lingnan) lives up to its motto of “Education for Service” through an internship-based course.

Starting from 2013 summer, Lingnan’s Department of Management and Office of Service-learning co-organized an intern placement-based programme named Service Leadership Summer Practicum Programme for students to work in social enterprises or non-governmental organizations for 8 weeks.

Prof. Robin Snell, Professor of the Department of Management and Director of the Office of Service-Learning, points out that the programme is a perfect match between community groups and students. It is a win-win situation in that community groups benefit from the students’ input, while students gain practical experience in social service. As a result of outstanding outcomes, the practicum programme has transformed into a credit-bearing course called Service Leadership Summer Practicum (MGSL 3001) from 2015-16 academic year.

“Since the programme does not overly impose restrictions on, or set guidelines for, the partner organizations, as long as they offer suitable training opportunities, our students

often get to handle community projects from scratch, in accordance with their interests and preference,” says Prof. Snell. “They find that they can effectively apply the theories on service leadership in a wide range of social issues and community engagements. They are required to make presentations and submit reports on their work and learning outcomes.”

David Chow Chi-Kong, Operation Manager of Yan Oi Tong Social Enterprises, a partner of the course, comments: “Although not every student’s proposal is feasible, their



Sam Lam Cheong-Ping, David Chow Chi-Kong, Prof. Robin Snell, Wong Yi-Pan (from left)

creativity brings us new insights. For instance, the idea of initiating an aquaponics project might not sound feasible within a period of only 8 weeks, but it does open up discussions and a new direction for Yan Oi Tong. With the sustained efforts of the students and the co-operation of local farms, the project will soon be realized.”

The course has been well received by students. Wong Yi-Pan, a year 4 student studying Social and Public Policy Studies, says that her experience in Yan Oi Tong is invaluable as it “combines both service learning and internship” and exposes her to the real world to gain working experience.

Sam Lam Cheong-Ping, a year 3 student studying Accounting, decides to devote his career to community service. “We came up with a detailed proposal last summer to start up an organic café, and I will probably put

the plan into action after my graduation.” He highlights the fact that the marketing and accounting skills he learnt from school can be put into practice.



Prof. Snell hopes to continue and consolidate the course as he sees that the community needs entrepreneurs who are aware of their social responsibility.