

## **Dr David Wong Yau-kar *BBS, JP***

Council Chairman Mr Bernard Chan, President Yuk-Shee Chan, Honorary Fellows, Lingnanians, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Today I am deeply honoured to receive an honorary fellowship from Lingnan University. And I am doubly honoured to have the opportunity to address this distinguished audience on behalf of the other three honorary fellows, namely Mr Ho Hei-wah, Mr Samuel Tsien, and Mr Lincoln Yung. Along with Mr Dominic Ng, who was conferred an honorary fellowship in a separate ceremony, these gentlemen have all made tremendous contributions to the Hong Kong community. What is particularly notable is that the contributions they have made in their respective professional and business fields are well recognised not only here in Hong Kong, but also internationally. I think that the international profile of these honorary fellows is very fitting of Lingnan University, which is devoted to instilling in its students an international outlook and cross-cultural perspectives. To this end, the University offers exchange programme places for half of its undergraduates to study at more than 100 overseas or Mainland partner institutions. This effort by the University is highly laudable, because Hong Kong being an international city in a highly integrated world, there is nothing more important than for our students to connect globally.

Indeed, the broad-based interdisciplinary curriculum offered by Lingnan University is a direct product of its mission as a liberal arts university. Its whole-person approach to education, and I quote with liberty, “aims to cultivate values, skills, competence, and sensibilities that enable graduates to realise their full potential and to pursue their life and career goals in a rapidly changing social, cultural, and economic environment”.

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These are of course admirable goals that I fully agree with. But, coming from the business community, allow me to elaborate on these goals in more worldly terms. Students—and their parents—are often anxious to know what course of study to pursue, so that the students would acquire the necessary knowledge for them to survive, and prosper, in their career. Well, here's the problem. The typical university student is acquiring knowledge that they will need for the next, say, 50 years. But nobody really knows what knowledge our students will need in the next 50 years. After all, the typical university student today will change not only his job, but his entire career, several times during his lifetime. So, what that shows is that what is important is not so much the specialised knowledge per se that our students get in the university. What is important is for them to acquire the necessary skills of reading, writing, critical thinking, and, above all, keeping an open and inquiring mind. That's because it is with these skills that they could continue to acquire the knowledge that they will need in the future, and to apply it to solve problems in an ever-changing world.

Put differently, fulfilling one's life and career goals will depend not on one's specialised knowledge, which will become obsolete, but on one's ability to continually acquire new knowledge and adapt to new situations. That is the goal of liberal arts education, and I think Lingnan is fulfilling that goal with tremendous success.

In closing, on behalf of Mr Ho Hei-wah, Mr Samuel Tsien, Mr Lincoln Yung and myself, let me once again express our gratitude to Lingnan University and its Council for conferring this great honour on us, and to everyone who has given us support and encouragement. We pledge to do our best to contribute to the future development of Lingnan, and we wish the University and Lingnanians every success. Thank you very much.