

Professor Yuk-Shee CHAN

Citation

The story within the story of Prof Yuk-Shee Chan, President of Lingnan University, is that he became an academic leader, not driven by personal ambition, but by a sense of purpose. He never set his mind on being a university president. But then, he never planned on being the founding dean of the world-acclaimed HKUST Business School either. He is an educator's educator. All he ever wanted was to be a teacher, heart and soul. In this he was inspired by a high-school mentor who threw himself totally into his teaching, writing beautiful Chinese characters on the blackboard only to erase and rewrite them in the next lesson. He took that lesson to heart—doing things with maximum purpose and passion. Everything else was an afterthought.

By definition, trail-blazers are natural leaders. But Prof Chan is a leader with a difference: he is totally egoless and self-effacing, a soft-spoken man who prefers to speak through his actions, and who leads by listening. But make no mistake. This leader is a quick study. When he answered the call to be the founding dean of our Business School, he might have a thin résumé in administration, though he was a rising academic star as a Chair Professor in Finance at the University of Southern California at the improbable age of 36. But lack of experience was no impediment, as President Kennedy used to say “There are no schools for presidents either.” What he lacked in management was more than made up for by his ability to see his way forward. And he quickly saw that the royal road to building

a world-class business school was by running it strictly on international standards, creating an intellectual environment which was a home-away-from-home for top-tier academics. He knew, too, that institutional reputation rests on research output and impact. By putting research on the front-burner, Prof Chan quickly put HKUST Business School on the world map.

Speaking of being on the world map, academically speaking, Hong Kong had never come first in anything, until our joint EMBA program came along. By the time he left HKUST, this program was ranked among the world's top-three. Remarkably, for the past four years in a row, it was ranked the world's number one program. As its co-founder, Prof Chan deserves a big chunk of the credit.

When Prof Chan took charge, there was no EMBA program in Hong Kong or Asia which catered to the training needs of senior executives of major international corporations. Prof Chan saw the opening and seized it, wondering why business leaders in Asia should have to travel to the US for their business training. But first-rate business leaders demand a first-rate program. As a virtual unknown, HKUST needed a world leader for a partner to usher in world-class quality. The stars were properly aligned for this partnership. Prof Chan himself had taught at the Kellogg School of Management at the Northwestern University, and so had our business professor Steve DeKrey. Indeed our founding President Prof Chia-Wei Woo

was also for many years a Physics professor at Northwestern. So when Prof Chan approached Dean Donald Jacobs of Kellogg School their mutual trust was such that the agreement on a joint EMBA program was sealed by no more than a handshake, with nothing in black and white. The rest, as they say, is history.

Though the School's achievements were spectacular, Prof Chan's contributions to HKUST went far beyond the School and its elite programs. When he later became HKUST's Vice-President for Academic Affairs, he applied the same exacting standards to building quality education for our students. He was one of the architects for the University's all-round excellence.

In 2007, Prof Chan was called to a bigger mission: to assume the presidency of Lingnan University. Of necessity, at Lingnan, he adopted and adapted a different strategy. Whereas HKUST is a research university, Lingnan is a liberal arts university whose fortunes will rise or fall on the quality of its teaching. He firmly believes that a good liberal arts institution thrives on being small and residential. Here again, Prof Chan is seized by a sense of mission. Liberal arts colleges in Asia are few and far between, and good ones are rarer still. Prof Chan has set his sights on giving Hong Kong the finest liberal arts education possible. To reach this goal, he hangs his hat on quality, determined to give the students an integrated living and learning environment on campus and ample global exposure. Upon completing his five-year term as President, Lingnan University is on track to be 100% residential in 2013, with more than 50% of the students now enjoying exchange experience for a semester during their study. Indeed, Lingnan looks set to be the place where liberal arts will make the students whole and where "small is beautiful".

Mr Council Chairman, on behalf of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, I have the high honor of presenting to you Prof Yuk-Shee Chan, SBS, JP, President of Lingnan University, for the award of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.