

Mr. Martin TANG Yue-Nien

Citation

Pinpointing the right person for the job at the apex of an enterprise is a crucial task. It has the potential to change the nature of an industry or institution, launch a global trend, and impact the opportunities of millions of people. Imagine how this talent for top talent-spotting could be harnessed to help a university, as Mr. Martin TANG Yue-Nien has done, as former Vice-Chairman and Acting Chairman of the HKUST Council.

Yet Mr. Tang's career path could have been so very different. As the only son of cotton spinning and garment business magnate Dr. Jack TANG Chi-Chien, the young Martin was always expected to go into the textile industry. Higher education in the US in the mid-1960s and early 1970s set the scene: first, in electrical engineering at Cornell University; and later a master of science at MIT Sloan School of Management. Four years in finance at Bank of America in the US and Taiwan followed, before joining the family firm.

Starting from the bottom with a challenging posting to Indonesia, Mr. Tang worked diligently but couldn't shake the feeling that manufacturing just wasn't right for him. Then, in the mid-1980s, he left the family business for Techno-Ventures Hong Kong Ltd, the city's first structured venture capital fund management firm, where he was introduced to the executive search world while locating key personnel, and was eventually headhunted himself.

When Mr. Tang joined human capital consultancy Norman Broadbent in 1988, he soon knew he had found his passion. He loved the travel and talking to clients and potential candidates from a vast array of industries. Four years later, he switched to Spencer Stuart & Associates, a global giant. Over the next 16 years, he built up the company in Asia from a struggling branch in Hong Kong to a regional powerhouse, establishing offices in Shanghai, Beijing and Singapore and spending a decade as Chairman, Asia and a board member of the parent company in the USA.

During his time in executive search, Mr. Tang located CEOs, CFOs, and many other senior executives in areas as diverse as private equity and government-related bodies, chemicals and consumer goods. The education sector was another repeat client. He was involved in searches for five of the eight University Grants Committee institutions.

Given this distinctive combination of wide-ranging business trends, insights into evolving marketplace needs, and understanding of the university environment, Mr. Tang was also a great fit to assist governance of the higher education sector. Recognized as such by the Hong Kong government, he has enthusiastically undertaken public service appointments over a span of 25 years for HKUST and the University Grants Committee. Motivation for such contribution lies

in his belief that education is the real key to the advancement of human goals, such as peace and the development of young people who truly care about our planet's future; and his wish to follow US philanthropist Charles Feeney's generosity-driven philosophy of "giving while living".

Mr. Tang first joined the HKUST Council in 1993, just two years after the University's establishment. He strengthened appointment-related procedures as chair of the recruitment committee, a vital job in a fledgling university that viewed "first-class people" as its greatest asset.

After membership of the University Court (1999-2003), Mr. Tang returned to the Council as Vice-Chairman from 2013-2015. In this capacity and as chair of the human resources committee, he worked tirelessly to facilitate University senior management in turning the challenge of shifting from a 3-year to a 4-year undergraduate curriculum structure into an opportunity to keep HKUST's graduates among the world's best. As in the wider world, good governance and greater transparency were also on the Council's agenda, with the introduction of key performance indicators and annual operating plans at HKUST. Invaluably, in 2014, Mr. Tang stepped up as Acting Chairman after the untimely demise of Chairman Dr. Marvin Cheung. Today, he maintains his ties as an Advisory Board member for the Institute for Public Policy.

Mr. Tang's dedication to assisting others and fascination for myriad sectors also led to numerous directorships of public, private, and not-for-profit organizations. In addition, he has proved an exemplary alumnus, giving back continuously

to his own two US alma maters through bringing together fellow alumni, presiding over alumni organizations, forging bonds east and west, as well as donations.

It has certainly been a full-contribution journey. From the ripple effect of apt leadership placement to all-round support for education to develop the frontrunners of tomorrow, Mr. Tang has sought to use his strengths where they could best be applied. We are thus proud to recognize today Mr. Tang's inspiring determination to make a difference in many different ways to our University and multiple others far beyond.

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, Mr. Martin Tang Yue-Nien, former Vice-Chairman and Acting Chairman of the HKUST Council, for the award of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*.