



ISSUE  
**02** / 2012-2013  
**dialogue**



**Everything NEW at HKU**

Visiting the Residential Colleges

**Sustainability @ HKU**

Teaching in the Year of Double-cohort

**Introducing Experiential Learning**

Part-time Kings and Queens

**Reach Up to The Stars: Students' Achievements**



The academic year of 2012-13 truly marks a new chapter in the history of HKU. The Centennial Campus, housing three Faculties, is a new landmark of the University, while the Residential Colleges in Kennedy Town offer a new residential experience to local and non-local students in the neighborhood. Together with the double cohort year came the full implementation of the 4-year undergraduate curriculum and several distinctive features in teaching and learning at HKU (for instance, experiential learning, Common Core Curriculum and First Year Experience). It may now be the right time to take a closer look at these distinctive features and see how the HKU community has adapted to the changes while keeping the proud tradition of HKU and its vibrant university life.



The four Residential Colleges on Lung Wah Street, Kennedy Town, have been offering a new residential experience for 1800 HKU students since last September. With the leadership of the College Masters, the Colleges are building on their unique features and traditions. After almost two semesters in operation, Dialogue talks to the residents, from masters to exchange students, about their stay and how they find their new home.

## Interview with Professor Gabriel Leung, College Master of Block B, LWSRC

Lam Seo Yun, Kimberly  
Arts, Year 3

Professor Leung is currently the Professor and Head of Department of Community Medicine at the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine as well as the College Master of Block B, Residential Colleges. He returned to the University after serving in the HKSAR Government. He specialises in public health sciences and is also an avid pianist and conductor.

Can you please provide us with some background or context about the Residential Colleges?

HKU have a long and proud tradition of residential learning ever since the first few residence halls were built. We have always run a very vibrant on-campus community by providing student housing. What we have not done in our first 100 years is to try out the so-called Oxbridge college system which originated from the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge. The Oxbridge colleges do a lot of their teaching through small group tutorials and these are run by the colleges. In our centenary year we are beginning to experiment with this whole idea of enriching the on-campus living experience for our students. While we will not be pursuing the Oxbridge tutorial model where we deliver actual teaching at the College, we would still hope to provide some tutorials, college fellows, and mentoring. We are working towards building that culture and spirit.

What is the specific role of a College Master?

I see myself as a shepherd, as someone who lays out the framework, a vision, a direction, and tries to encourage people to pitch in and contribute their ideas to help build this College. The College culture has to evolve organically through every member of the College. The student body first and foremost, but also the tutorial team consisting of the master, deputy master, senior tutor, the group of tutors, as well as the non-residential college fellows we are proactively considering.

What are some of the new developments we can expect to see at the Residential Colleges?

We want to make sure all the facilities are ready. We're still in the middle of trying to refurbish the dining hall, which will be the largest hall of its kind, almost like Lok Yew Hall on the Main Campus. There are also various special function rooms within the Colleges. Their usages are to be decided on. We have a College garden that is shared by all four Colleges, but we're still waiting for the arrival of summer to start planting. We still don't have the catering facility in operation yet so we aim to have something operational by the start of the next academic year. We're still making sure that the physical infrastructure is there. These are all the things that we need to take care of first.



# contents

### Cover Story ●●●

- 03-07 / Residential Colleges on Lung Wah Street
  - Interview with Professor Gabriel Leung, College Master of Block B, LWSRC
  - How's Life in the Residential Colleges?
  - Block D: A Residential College with a Sustainable Backbone

08-09 / A Double Challenge with Double-cohort

10-11 / Sustainability @ HKU

12-13 / Introducing Experiential Learning

14 / Chances to Serve the Global Community

15 / How was Your First Year Experience?

16-17 / Sharing Family, Enhancing Experience

### In Dialogue ●●●

18-19 / Part-time Kings and Queens

### Reach Up to the Stars ●●●

20 / Have Your Cake – but Don't Eat It!

21 / Fencing Champions!

22 / Rewarding Golden Services

23 / Home Sweet Home

24 / A Promise of Love

25 / Keep Breaking Records!

### Culture ●●●

26 / Passing On the Passion for Poetry

27-28 / 'Slam Poetry' In Search of Artistic Expression



**What are some of the developments that you are particularly excited about?**

We are beginning a "Stay Young, Dream Big" series of monthly talks which will be provided by post-80s and 90s young people who are not quite superstars yet but are well on their way to be superstars in their respective fields. We want to catch people early, identify people early, and encourage young people. These talks will be in the late evening and we'll serve dessert afterwards over a coffee session.

We also plan on having local walking tours to learn more about Kennedy Town, which is exactly where the British landed when they first came to Hong Kong. So there's a lot of history around the College area. These are all the things we've been working on and slowly one by one we are trying to sculpt the early character of the College.

**What are the main ways that the Colleges differ from the established HKU halls? Are the key differences intentional?**

What we want to do are two things. One is that we want to have a true college culture. We are not trying to sculpt with any prior set of expectations. We're trying to encourage and facilitate every member of the Colleges to contribute to this process of evolution. Secondly, we want to retain the very best traditions of HKU hall culture such as the high table dinners, the camaraderie, and the esprit de corps. Also, to have unity of purpose so we all are a part of the HKU family.

However, we also want to innovate through some modified form of the Oxbridge tutorial system. We want to offer a wider diversity of experiential choice for students. If every single hall or college is the same, then surely it will not be able to match the diversity of the student body we admit.

**I know there is a huge international presence in the Colleges. How do the Colleges accommodate this multi-cultural mix?**

We aim to eventually have half of the members of the Colleges come from the undergraduate population and the other half from the graduate population, along with a handful of visiting scholars. That's the mix of the academic background.

As far as the place of origin is concerned, we have already achieved roughly one third each of local, mainland, and overseas students. I think that's working quite well. As for opportunities for cultural exchange, we actually have cultural nights. Often times, the local students will take the international students to early morning or late night dim sum. This is the sort of deep immersion that I hope every single visiting student will be able to live through. To me it is equally, if not more valuable than anything you'll learn from a textbook.

**You are an avid music lover and quite an accomplished musician. Do you have any plans to develop a music program at the residence?**

It depends on what the students want. I'd be happy to be a part of that process but I don't think that it'll turn out to be a music-oriented College. I hope that music will be a part of the college life, but certainly not the only aspect of it. I wish to let 100 flowers bloom on his or her own while retaining the commonality of a College identity.

**For students who are unfamiliar with the Kennedy Town area, do you have any advice for them?**

Kennedy Town as you can probably tell is experiencing a renaissance. My advice is to explore the Kennedy Town of today because it may be a very different place very quickly. It's an exciting townscape full of history and full of good people with their own stories to tell. That's part of the excitement of living in it.



# How's Life in the Residential Colleges?

Lam Seo Yun, Kimberly Arts, Year 3 ●●●● Qi Qi, Mia Arts, Year 2 ●●●●

Residential Colleges have an assortment of single rooms and shared rooms with an open pantry and lounge on each floor. Each building within the Colleges has its own "Master", who acts as a mentor and advisor for students living there. In order for students to get a better insight into living in the newly established Colleges, we asked students from different backgrounds about their views on living there.



Name: Alexander John Büsser / Curriculum: Computer Science / Exchange Student from Switzerland (studying in the UK)

**What is the experience of living in the Colleges like from the perspective of an exchange student?**

Living in the Colleges has been great. You get to meet lots of people from all over the world, which has been the highlight of my experience so far. It has especially been an opportunity to get to know the local students as most of the students on my floor are either local or from the mainland. I've learned a lot from them and a lot about the way they live. People from Hong Kong are extremely friendly and hardworking. Thanks to them, I even got to experience the "hot pot" culture.

**Any hidden gems in Kennedy Town?**

In Kennedy Town I usually eat at the Indian restaurant or the corner Chinese. There's a baker on Belcher's Street (turn left when going down from the Colleges), which is really good and cheap as well!

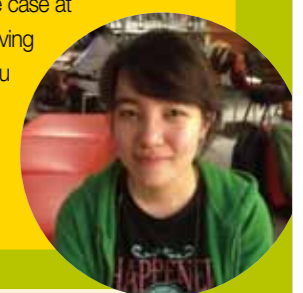
Name: Linn Schjerven / Curriculum: Bachelor of Journalism / International Student (half Norwegian, half Chinese)

**How has your experience been living in the Colleges, especially from the perspective of an international student?**

I previously lived in RC Lee Hall. While it was great and people were really nice, it was kind of hard to integrate. As an international student, I was limited in the types of activities I could join. A lot of them were in Cantonese so you could really only do sports. That isn't the case at the Colleges, where activities are in English and all-inclusive. There are activities going on all the time. The best thing about living in the Colleges is being in Kennedy Town. I think it's great that we're so close to the local community. You have everything you need and the people here are really nice.

**Any hidden gems in Kennedy Town?**

The residents tend to gather at the little restaurant at the corner of Pokfield Road and a lot of people go to Ria.



Name: Jeffrey Tse / Curriculum: Bachelor of Arts / Local Student

**What is unique about living in the Colleges?**

For me, there are two aspects. First of all, I am able to meet a large number of exchange students from all over the world. Secondly, I am able to have personal time to catch up with school work or other activities. This is different from life in traditional halls in HKU.

**Is your life in the Colleges the way you expected it to be?**

Yes, my life here is how I imagined it to be. I expected a residence that shows me how to maximise my time in school, not only for my studies but also for other student activities around the school.

**Do you feel like the establishment of RCs has made changes to the community around it?**

I feel like the community has become more international due to the large intake of exchange students. Also, I think that the community is more energetic now, since the majority of local residents around the Kennedy Town area are between the age of 40 and 70.



# Block D: A Residential College with a Sustainable Backbone

Lam Seo Yun, Kimberly  
Arts, Year 3

Block D of the Residential Colleges on Lung Wah Street is much more than just a student dormitory.

It is quickly emerging as a hub for intellectual development; a learning platform that enables students to be more in sync with the community that surrounds them.

Through the leadership of Dr. Sarah Liao, an environmental scientist in chemical toxicology, and Dr. Billy Hau, an ecologist and lecturer at HKU, the theme of sustainability and nature conservation is being ingrained in Block D's developing identity and culture. "In everything we do, we try to put in a sustainable angle," explains Dr. Liao, "To start off with, I feel like it's important that the students actually get in touch with nature. Because we live in such a concrete jungle, you can practically grow up without seeing anything about nature. As a result, you develop very little empathy with the natural environment". Dr. Liao and Dr. Hau aim to design an experience for students that will enable them to see nature, touch nature, and be a part of it. Most importantly, they seek to stimulate discussion on how nature, economic activity, social development, and the humanities work together.

Students living in Block D have already had the opportunity to attend an Aberdeen country park walk and a bird-watching session at the Mai Po nature reserve. However, as a prerequisite to visiting the bird sanctuary, students must attend a lecture to understand what Mai Po represents, hear about what kind of birds they will encounter, and learn how to identify them. Lectures such as these ensure that students extract the most meaning from their encounters with nature. The lecture aims to challenge each student to reflect on questions such as: Why is biodiversity important? What is the relationship between human and nature? How can we peacefully coexist?

On the actual residential ground, Dr. Liao and Dr. Hau are working towards ingraining a reuse, renew, and recycle mentality that counters the buy, use, and dump way of life that is so characteristic of Hong Kong. Block D's entire lobby is furnished with second-hand furniture, illustrating the idea that used items that are in good condition can invariably be reused. Why waste them?

Whenever students begin to move out of the Colleges at the end of a semester, a garage sale would be organised, enabling students to bring out good quality, reusable items they intended to discard to exchange with their peers. The garage sale was a huge success last December as students not only left with a renewed understanding of the proverbial "one person's garbage is another person's treasure", but also a renewed realisation that recycling is not that hard when there is a willing heart and each student's minute contributions can amount to something quite significant in reducing the pressure on our environment caused by solid waste disposal.

Proper day-to-day waste management and recycling are something that Dr. Liao and Dr. Hau consider to be fundamental. They are working towards establishing a culture of automatic waste separation upon every instance of disposal, a concept that is still foreign in Hong Kong. Block D is currently in the process of procuring recycling bins that will be placed throughout the building. Paper-recycling bins will be made available on each floor to make paper-recycling as convenient as possible while plastic bottles and cans will be collected in bins situated on the podium



Dr. Liao (right) and Dr. Hau (left) of Block D



Block D's entire lobby is furnished with second hand furniture.

the garden throughout the year and developing educational displays about the plants and wildlife. Furthermore, there will be a community park below the podium on ground level. In the long term, they hope to develop some areas of the park as organic farming and provide keen members of the Kennedy Town community with a space for recreational planting and farming.

Dr. Liao and Dr. Hau are united in their vision to develop a new style of residential life where students are not only able to experience a taste of HKU's most cherished hall traditions and engage in activities typical of college students, but also have an opportunity to immerse themselves in an environment that fosters experiential learning beyond the classroom context. With the guidance of Dr. Liao and Dr. Hau, students will not only cultivate awareness for sustainable living and environmental protection, but also be able to exercise such ideas on a daily basis and integrate them into their university lives.

level. In the near future, a recycling centre will be established in the central area of all four blocks to collect more complex recyclables such as batteries, cartridges, and old clothes. When the Colleges' dining facility is in place, a mechanism for sorting and storing perishable waste will also be introduced. All the proceeds from these recycling efforts will go into funding the Colleges' student-led initiatives.

Furthermore, the Colleges are anticipating some exciting future developments. In this summer, they plan to create an eco garden using the planters on the podium. According to Dr. Hau, the objective is to "plant things that will integrate with the natural environment and attract butterflies and other wildlife to make their homes within the garden". Students will be provided with essential gardening training, learn how to select the species to plant, and be wholly in charge of maintaining



# A Double Challenge with Double-cohort

Qi Qi, Mia  
Arts, Year 2 and Dialogue Editorial ● ● ●

All universities in Hong Kong welcomed a “double-cohort” of undergraduate students as the 334 educational reform finally reached tertiary institutions last September. Almost an academic year later, one may wonder if there is real difference between the four-year programme and the original three-year one, or, is it just one more year to be spent at university? While students may have adjustment issues, it's often overlooked that teachers may need to adjust their teaching approaches and strategies to make the whole curriculum enjoyable. Dialogue talked to two winners of the Outstanding Teaching Award at the University of Hong Kong for the year 2012, namely Dr. Gary James Harfitt and Dr. Robert Peckham, for their views on the changes and challenges.



Dr. Gary James Harfitt from the Faculty of Education (left)

Dr. Robert Peckham and his class

Welcoming the double-cohort year

This kind of exchange between students from diverse backgrounds makes teaching and learning exciting.

Dr. Robert Peckham from the School of Humanities

The change in curriculum reflects changes in society as well as changes in the professions to be studied. It's a chance for faculties to review and restructure the learning opportunities offered to students, and therefore is more than simply adding extra courses to prolong the study period. “Once the courses are put in the curriculum, they stay for many years. We have to make sure they are well-planned, well-thought out, well-implemented, and have room to extend,” says Dr. Gary James Harfitt from the Faculty of Education.

One of the highlights of the reform is to promote a more student-centred teaching approach. “A lot of attention has been placed on maximising the teaching and learning experience in younger students,” says Dr. Harfitt, “The emphasis has shifted to the student as the focus of teaching, and with the combination of new and existing courses, to bring new challenges to them.”

The reform also brings new challenges to teachers. Dr. Robert Peckham from the School of Humanities believes that teaching nowadays means more than giving lectures while students take notes. “The challenge (for teachers) is to keep (students) interested, and to develop creative strategies that promote interactivity,” he said. Introducing debates and discussion can lead to unexpected learning outcomes. Dr. Peckham

emphasises that learning is a two-way process: he is often inspired by ideas he has never considered before from his class. This kind of exchange between students from diverse backgrounds makes teaching and learning exciting.

The new four-year programme means more credits are needed for graduation. Jumping from 180 to 240 credits may sound horrifying to many students, but Dr. Harfitt believes that with the huge pool of extra courses and more flexible course selection guidelines, students will be encouraged to move towards cross-disciplinary collaboration, and to explore their interests and potential in areas other than their major.

One of the big steps the University has taken in order to cultivate cross-disciplinary intellectual exchange is the introduction of the Common Core Curriculum. Undergraduate students under the four-year curriculum are normally required to take six Common Core courses (36 credits), whereas in the three-year programme, students are required to take two (12 credits).

The Common Core Curriculum, divided into four Areas of Inquiry, is carefully structured to help students from various academic backgrounds pursue their interests regardless of their discipline.

“It provides an incredible context for approaching big questions and looking at them from different disciplinary perspectives,” says Dr. Peckham. “It's about reconfiguring learning in the University in relation to the big issues out in the world.” He believes that this is a good setting to develop critical thinking, and that it will inspire students to think more broadly about the world around them.

Dr. Peckham has risen to the challenge of creating a curriculum which is suitable for students from different faculties across the University. He also tries to implement multimedia in his classes. “It's important to be able to read across media. Watching movies and documentaries can be an important part of critical training. But students have to learn to ‘read’ the text, instead of treating film as pure entertainment.”

In addition to the changes in curriculum structure and teaching approach, some teachers have introduced new ways of assessing students. Taking the Faculty of Education as an example, there are a larger number of continuous assessments, such as reflection or online comments on modules, and there are smaller pieces of work and small presentations throughout the course. Assessment therefore is not solely at the end of the course, which will help balance students' workloads during exam periods.

Another major step taken in the new curriculum is the official establishment of the academic advising system which provides each student with an advisor, with whom he or she meets up once every semester to discuss the progress of their studies. Some faculties, such as Law and Education, also provide first-year students with student advisors who are studying at a senior level in the same programme. “It enables students to have a very strong channel to communicate their experience and to be supported,” says Dr. Harfitt, “It also brings teachers and students closer together.”

Finally, the advice these two award-winning professors would give to students would be to follow their own interests when choosing courses. “Don't go to courses just because your friends are there,” says Dr. Peckham, “explore different areas and make friends from other places in the University.” “Make the most of every single day!” added Dr. Harfitt.

# Sustainability @ HKU

Chum Xiao Tong, Hazel  
Government & Laws, Year 2 ● ● ●



Ms Ann Kildahl, Sustainability Manager of HKU

It is almost a must to take “low-carbon” and “sustainability” into consideration when setting up a modern institute or business nowadays. And HKU is no exception. This year, sustainability has been almost synonymous with the Centennial Campus, with every aspect of its design related to being environmentally friendly.

Spearheading HKU's sustainability goal is the Sustainability Office, a small team that has already accomplished some amazing things behind the scenes.

As Sustainability Manager, Ann Kildahl has been engaged in HKU's sustainability efforts for many years. Working together with Assistant Sustainability Manager Joy Lam, two research assistants, and a group of interns which changes each semester, they have to be “energetic champions” to brave the daunting tasks ahead of them. As Ms Kildahl says, championing sustainability is very much a work in progress. Progress is never as quick or as efficient as they would like, but they can see attitudes changing, and more interest being generated from staff and students alike.

Many students may not have heard about some of the important achievements the University has already accomplished. Take the feat of engineering required to make the Centennial Campus happen for example, the site was previously owned by the Water Services Department, with fresh and salt water reservoirs on location. After the site was handed over to HKU, the University repositioned the reservoirs, built a cavern inside the adjoining hill and placed the reservoirs inside. This made for an innovative and environmentally friendly way to clear land for the new campus, and was the first project of its kind in Hong Kong. The University has already attained the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification for the Centennial Campus. As a further testament to its commitment to sustainability, HKU initiated the formation of the Hong Kong Sustainable Campus Consortium which is currently in its third year of operation.

The University is also working on a more campus-focused level to achieve sustainability. Fighting food waste is at the forefront of the many sustainability initiatives. Currently, 30% of municipal solid waste is composed of wasted food. Of that, 1% is wasted by universities.



Ms Celeste Shai, GenEd Programme Officer

At HKU, roughly 18,000 meals are served per day during term time. Measures have been put into place to avoid matters from getting worse: a composter installed on campus has just commenced operation, and canteens on the Centennial Campus have agreed to use it. This composter treats all the food waste and turns it into compost, and plans are underway for this to be used in gardening projects.

Students have also been working to reduce waste. The student-led Empty Plates Project not only encourages diners to leave empty plates, but also has a “guilt wall,” on which people who waste food will be publicly denounced!

The Sustainability Office's partnerships with various organisations also herald exciting opportunities for the student body. With the Office's support, two rooftop farming projects are in the works: a partnership between the General Education Unit (GenEd), Bijias Vegetarian Restaurant, and an NGO; and a collaboration between a Landscape Architecture class led by Assistant Professor Matthew Pryor and a local charity, both aim to bring urban farming to campus. GenEd has offered an Urban Farming Workshop in April, allowing students to learn more about sustainable food and have a more hands-on farming experience. If all goes well, HKU may have a self-contained food system in which food can be grown on campus, consumed in restaurants, and the waste recycled, resulting in zero food waste. In the meantime, the University's Catering Committee is introducing “small scoop” initiative to minimise wasted rice in the larger canteens. Also, HKU is the first university in Hong Kong to support the “Green Monday” campaign as 11 canteens on campus offer vegetarian options on Mondays.

Besides food, soap recycling is also rising in prominence. A group of business students from SoapCycling, led by lecturer David Bishop, collect, sterilise and recycle unwanted soaps from hotels and donate them to NGOs and charities for hygiene and sanitation projects throughout Asia. GenEd's Handmade Soap Workshop is the result of a partnership with “So...Soap!”, a social enterprise which recycles bottles and uses organic ingredients to make sure its soap is environmentally friendly. It has even been able to sell the soaps through fashion brand agnès b.



Wind Turbines

Another point of concern is energy use. The Centennial Campus features carefully chosen materials, design, sun shading and air conditioning to minimise environmental impact. Old buildings are being retrofitted to be more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions. The Chow Yei Ching Building and the T. T. Tsui Building are being upgraded through an energy performance contract. New wind turbines are also playing their part in generating electricity for the campus.

While students may not have noticed the efforts the University has undertaken to improve energy efficiency, they will have certainly noticed the recycling bins set up all over campus. Ms Kildahl acknowledges the difficulty in measuring the exact amount of waste recycled, but she is sure that it is working. Contractors currently pay the school for any paper, metal, or plastic that is collected, and the numbers are undeniably rising. Even so, “Recycling is just being a little less bad,” Ms Kildahl says. “The goal is always to reduce.”

“Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” is a familiar mantra employed by countless environmentally friendly organisations. Despite its overuse, it has a valid point. People get so caught up in campaigning for environmental justice that they skip the basic steps. When asked about tips for staff and students, Ms Kildahl says that “our community is facing huge environmental problems, water, energy, waste. Every one of us has a role to play. The choices we make all matter. We're all part of a group, and the choices we make will contribute to that group doing a better job.”

Celeste Shai, GenEd Programme Officer, says that “the problem of sustainability may not be that urgent for students, as we all may have other priorities.” However she hopes that everyone would take another look at these programmes, as they really give a good view of the future. The future is in our hands, and we should make a change before things get worse.

With so much happening around campus, it seems as if the ball is in our court. Sustainability is no doubt a team effort, and unless we all pitch in, we will fall short. Be it in food waste, energy efficiency, recycling, or elsewhere, we all have a part to play in making our campus more sustainable. Only one question remains: are we up to the challenge?



Solar Panels



Roof Garden



Recycle Bins

# Introducing Experiential Learning

Lo Kinling  
Journalism, Year 2 and Dialogue Editorial ● ● ●



Students from the Faculty of Engineering frequently visited the site to gain first-hand experience of construction and supervision in the Project Mingde



Students presenting their designs and proposal to the villagers on-site to obtain direct feedback.



Over 250 staff, students, alumni and friends of HKU attended the Launch Ceremony of the Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre on 19 March 2012.



A design proposal done by a student participant of the "Flooding Bangkok-Experiencing Infrastructure" project

There is an old Chinese saying in Chu Hsi, "When you know something but don't act on it, your knowledge of it is still superficial." Nowadays, learning from attending lectures and reading books is perhaps not enough for university students. They need "all-round" development. That is why "Experiential Learning" has been a distinctive feature in the undergraduate curriculum reform in HKU, as its essence is to let students put what they have learnt into practice, or in other words, to learn through doing. Experiential learning is especially beneficial. When studying macroscopic or large-scale systems such as a river system or a foreign culture, students may find it hard to relate to the distant and abstract settings, and making a trip to see the "reality" will help them gain a sense of the "big picture", solve new problems and develop their own knowledge.

Experiential learning should be a familiar term to many students at HKU. Indeed, some faculties have been offering this learning as part of their curriculum for years. For instance, since 2003, Project Mingde of the Department of Civil Engineering has been taking students to the remote mountainous Guangxi Province where they help build infrastructure such as schools, footbridges, and cycle tracks; the Faculty of Law joined hands with the Hong Kong Refugee Advice Centre in 2009 to provide legal services to the community while students develop their legal skills; the Faculty of Business and Economics has introduced Business Consulting Practicum which gives students the chance to deal with real-life business problems faced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises in Hong Kong.

Now, with the establishment of the Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre in 2012, faculties are better supported to explore more outside-classroom learning opportunities as well as to encourage larger scale and credit-bearing experiential learning courses. Named after the donor Dr. Gallant Ho, who is a alumnus of HKU and a philanthropist, the Centre provides financial support to faculties or teachers for organising experiential learning activities and subsidising students' expenses. So

far, three funded projects are on-going, two more will be offered in the summer and two were completed last semester.

One such project is "Design and Build in Chinese Village" by the Faculty of Architecture. Last December, 64 year one architecture students spent a week in Changliu Village, Guangdong Province to help design and construct a public plaza in front of the village ancestral hall. Besides implementing their knowledge of architecture, students tackled on-site challenges such as limited materials and unpredictable weather. The students also learnt to appreciate the cultural value and importance of the public space in the traditional Chinese society.

Dorothy Tang, Assistant Professor of the Division of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture is the coordinator of another funded experiential learning project "Flooding Bangkok—Experiencing Infrastructure". She designed a semester-long course with a week-long fieldtrip and workshops for students to understand the inter-related nature of hydrological systems, with Thailand's Chao Phraya River as a case study.

"In a traditional classroom setting, we seldom have the luxury of time to step out to truly understand the physical environment related to large-scale problems, and often students produce solutions that are not grounded in reality or are too abstract and naïve," she says. Introducing real issues, real landscapes, and real people to a traditionally abstract classroom process is therefore hugely beneficial to the students.

During the Reading Week of the first semester, nine students and Tang embarked on an epic trip down the Chao Phraya River. They worked with students from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, discussed issues with local professional landscape planners, managers and representatives of many involved parties, and victims of the severe flooding in 2011. They went on numerous site-visits to learn about how the devastating flood affected the landscape, and to experience the infrastructures they had studied.

"We had a debriefing meeting every night during the trip. It was incredible for me as a teacher to see how students' knowledge base expanded in a short trip. Through cross-referencing, intense conversations and interviews with residents and stakeholders in the flood zone, I witnessed the students gain a new understanding of the realities of flooding, and potential solutions," says Tang.

After the trip, students had to create their own alternative proposals to the current government's plans that addressed issues of flooding and water resource management along the Chao Phraya River. The difference experiential learning made to the students' work was obvious. "I am proud of the work that the students produced. Much of it reflected a sensitive understanding of the region that one can only gain by visiting," Tang comments.

Participant Stephanie Liu, a final year student of Landscape Studies, agreed that first-hand experience is valuable, "we could get a sense of scale, the climate, the natural and urban landscape, and a taste of Thai culture, all of which relate to the operation of the various water infrastructures along the river system. And we had fun too." Another final year Landscape Studies student Tamsin Thornburrow says, "I realised Landscape Architecture is an experience, not just a pretty site plan."

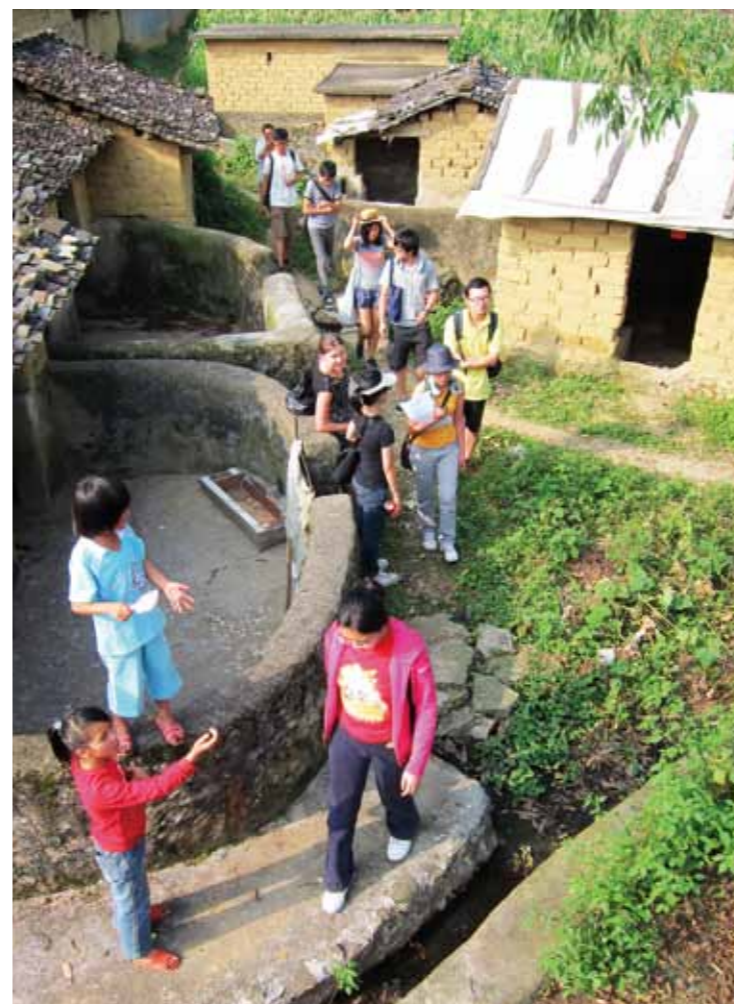
Yet, there is something more to gain. Director of the Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre, Dr. Albert Ko, believes that experiential learning does not only help students with their studies or career path, but also inspires them in a unique way.

Having a PhD in Engineering, Dr. Ko volunteered to provide engineering support to multiple disaster relief operations around the world. As a professional in the engineering and technology industry, Dr. Ko was accustomed to thinking from statistical and economic points of view, but working with a local community stimulated him to think in a more humane way. "When deciding what food to deliver to refugees, it seems obvious that nutrition bars may be the most suitable in terms of both economic and health principles," he says, "however, providing local food for the refugees can actually have a positive psychological impact on them."

The Centre cooperates with a wide-range of community partners including corporations, governmental departments and NGOs to find opportunities for students of different disciplines. Pre-trip training and workshops, such as language courses and briefing sessions will be held to equip students for their learning experiences.

There are cross-faculty opportunities so that students from different disciplines can share their knowledge and work together. At the moment, the Centre focuses on supporting more academic-oriented, credit-bearing programmes while CEDARS support those non-credit bearing ones. The two school units work closely together to maximise the benefit to students.

If you would like to learn more about the experiential learning opportunities at HKU, please visit <http://ghelc.hku.hk>.



Students from the Faculty of Architecture stepped out of the classroom to collect data, identify local problems, and communicate with villagers in order to produce a design and construction proposal.



Students from the Division of Landscape Architecture visited the Chao Phraya River in Thailand

# Chances to Serve the Global Community

Ma Yin Lam, Cheryl  
Laws, Year 5 ●●●



In March 2013, the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and HKU launched the Uni-Y (HKU) partnership project to provide students with more opportunities to serve the local and international community.

Sharing the mission to help students achieve a balanced physical, psychological and spiritual development, Uni-Y sets out to foster students' leadership potential in order to develop their sense of social responsibility and serve the needs of our society.

At the moment, Uni-Y staff work between the CYMCA office and CEDARS-Student Development office to initiate and organise programmes for HKU students. In the first semester of 2013-14, student will form the Uni-Y (HKU) Student Executive Committee and tailor-made meaningful programmes for their fellow HKU students.

"A student cabinet can extend students' leadership potential and enhance their communication ability by planning, organising and implementing various projects," says Carman Wong, Coordinating Secretary of University & College YMCA Department. "We treasure students' creativity and a CYMCA staff member will act as an advisor to help the Exco realise their plans." Wong believes students can also gain global exposure with YMCA's worldwide network.

Prior to this, a student body affiliated to YMCA, Campus-Y (HKU), has been offering service opportunities to HKU students. In January, a group of Campus-Y (HKU) members organised a nine-day service trip to Vietnam. Before the trip, the team raised fund by hosting game booth and charity sale, and held a series of preparation workshops for the volunteers. During their time in Vietnam, they gave English lessons at primary schools in rural Vietnam; did labour work to improve the school library; visited local families, a center for the disabled, and sight-seeing spots; and exchanged with local university students to learn more about the Vietnam education situation.

In summer, Campus-Y (HKU) and YMCA Hong Kong have jointly arranged the International Internship Program 2013. Its first phrase is a two months internship at Taichung, Taiwan, and more internship destinations will be announced. Another exciting project Campus-Y (HKU) is cooking up is a joint university service trip to Cambodia in June.

For details of Uni-Y programmes and events, you can visit the official website of the CYMCA (<http://www.ymca.org.hk>) and Uni-Y's Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/uniycy>.

Here is a sneak peek of the upcoming Uni-Y programmes. Stay tuned!

### 1. Joint University Overseas Service Trips (2013 Summer)

This summer, students will be offered opportunities to visit countries spanning the globe. Students visiting Romania, Prague and Germany for two months will serve the gypsy children and hold art and music workshops at the European Union Festival. For students going to Greece for two weeks, they will discuss the economic situations of HK and Greece with world leaders and local students.

### 2. Global Y Trainee Programme (2013 Summer)

Students can gain international working experience at the YMCA centres for one to two months in the US, UK, Canada, Spain, Germany, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, India, Tanzania or China. They will be responsible for organising activities for the local children and youths.

### 3. The University and College YMCA International Youth Conference (17-24 July 2013)

The Hong Kong Alliance of University & College YMCA will organise an international youth conference on 17-24 July. The theme is Link-AGE, which comes from the observation that the relationship between individuals is diverging more in the digital age. Students will be actively engaged in seminars, discussions and local community services.



# How was Your First Year Experience?



Wendy Leung, BA, Year 1

"My schedule has been packed full ever since I got into HKU! I am involved in different hall teams like hockey and drama. The practices, meetings and rehearsals are hectic and I am still finding the way to balance them with my studies."



Jenny Sung Won Joo, BEd, Year 1

"My fondest memory is eating dim sum in Kennedy Town with my friends at 2 o'clock in the morning. Many students were there! I find it unusual and interesting. Two Korean friends brought me there. They are in their senior year in HKU. The Korean community here is close and I feel at home at HKU."



Vivien Lee, BBA(E&F), Year 1

"I find freedom and liberality in the university. HKU has provided plenty of facilities for students to do what they want, such as studying in the Learning Commons and holding activities in the amenities centres. It is easy to make friends in the University but at the same time easy to lose friends; a friend last semester doesn't mean they will still be your friend this semester. I am learning to adapt to this."



Htet Thiri Shwe, BBA(E&F), Year 1

"The people in HKU are very diverse. There are faces from every part of the world. That's my first reaction. I am very impressed by the student-run service organisations here. Some of them teach in Nepal, some do services in China and Africa. CEDARS subsidises many of these activities. This is very encouraging. For me, I come from Myanmar and I am part of Connecting Myanmar in HKU. I helped out in the Myanmar Festival and was so glad that people were supportive."



Anna Chau, LLB, Year 1

"On one hand, there is a lot of freedom in the University, like sometimes students skip class. There are also a lot of activities for students to explore themselves. On the other hand, I found that self-discipline is crucial in university life. No one is obliged to remind you of updates and notices. I have to keep up with them in the HKU portal email myself."



Dear Monica,

Beautiful spring has come, and the weather is getting warmer. How have you been lately? I miss you.

I still remember the first time I met you at the opening ceremony of the Family Sharing Programme – wearing sunglasses on your head, you held lovely little Michael in your arms while chatting with me and Katherine. Though I was a little shy and didn't talk much, as my English was not so good, I felt really lucky to have met you and could tell I was going to have a lot of nice memories with you in the days ahead.

Do you remember our first dinner gathering in Lei Yu Mun? Before the dinner, we chose seafood together, passing through the narrow alleys and the bustling seafood market. We watched the sunset by the shore, listening to the sea breeze. Later, at the dinner table, we chatted happily, and the seafood was so delicious! Your stories of love and life as an American immigrant impressed me a lot. Also, I was surprised that little James and Michael were so well-behaved and independent, and their English was so good at such a young age! They are really different from the children from my hometown.

The boys' Christmas caroling that you invited me to attend was another pleasant experience. When I watched you and your sons sing and dance on stage, I was very moved. I could feel your strong love and pride for your family and your passion for life. This emotion influenced me a lot, making me decide to love my own life more.

I really enjoyed the time with you and your family a lot, Monica. Thank you very much! You cared about me not only when we first met, but continually through the whole semester. You recommended a lot of interesting activities both on and off campus, and blessed me when I had exams or during festivals. Your kindness made me love Hong Kong, this vigorous city, much more!! I will treasure our memories forever!

Best regards,  
Echo



## Sharing Family, Enhancing Experience

CEDARS launched the new "Family Sharing Programme" in 2012 to enhance non-local students' cultural understanding and adaptation to the lifestyle of Hong Kong. 67 host families and 137 students from 28 countries were put in groups. Hosts invited student participants for at least two family functions, such as family meals and holiday celebrations from October 2012 to March 2013. Here are some letters between the students and their hosts.



Dear Eva,

Arriving in Hong Kong last September was both my first time coming here and my first time going anywhere in Asia. I felt that as an international exchange student, the Family Sharing Programme would be a good opportunity to meet new people in an unfamiliar environment and at a new university. Also, it would be an interesting way to learn more about local culture and traditions, as well as a few useful phrases!

Two students from the mainland were also allocated to our "family", making us a diverse group – China, Great Britain, and Hong Kong! This made for some rather interesting conversations when we met each other at the inauguration, comparing these very different societies and our thoughts on Hong Kong.

In light of this, thank you for the warm welcome and the invaluable service to help international students, like me, to involve more deeply in local culture. It is really great to have a friendly welcome to Hong Kong, and someone to ask all sorts of questions on life here.

I particularly enjoyed our "yum cha" gathering at a restaurant in Causeway Bay. As this was the first time that I had been for this type of meal, it was particularly interesting. It was useful to learn the fine points of etiquette and, of course, to taste all the different dishes (ho ho sik!). We also had a memorable dinner at a Korean barbeque restaurant in Mongkok – also my first experience of this type of dining that is popular among Hong Kong people. It was really valuable for us three 'mentees' to have your local knowledge of places to go, so that we could go and try your family's favourite restaurants.

Let's stay in touch, and organise another gathering in the near future!

All the best,  
Ben



Dear Eva,

Time flies. How are you these days?

Please let me express my sincere appreciation to you for the meetings you have organised for us – thank you very much. You are a kind host and we enjoy ourselves in this Family Sharing Programme. Together with Ben from the UK and Cathy from Beijing, we formed a "family" with very different cultures and backgrounds. It's an amazing chance to get together and share our experiences around the table.

Our first gathering was unforgettable for me. You invited us for an afternoon tea or "yum cha", a traditional and usual activity of Hong Kong people. Ben and I missed the bus stop that day and were almost lost in the hustle and bustle of Causeway Bay. Luckily we were able to find our way to meet you and Cathy. Sorry for being late on our first meet-up.

It was my first time tasting such delicate snacks in Hong Kong. I remember we had a hard time deciding on what to order when reading the menu. All the dishes sounded so attractive. We wanted to try them all! Steamed vermicelli rolls, creamy custard buns, shrimp dumplings, chicken feet... I truly admired the cook who had worked wonders in these small steamers. They were a feast for both the mouth and the eyes.

Thank you for your efforts to have us together, eating, talking, and sharing. I feel like we are brothers and sisters in a family.

Best regards,  
Tom

Dear Ben and Tom,

I'm great! I'm happy to know that you enjoyed the meetings in the Family Sharing Programme. I was worried that "yum cha" is a common practice and you would not enjoy it or think it was not special. However, I am relieved to know it was an unforgettable experience for you two. I enjoyed myself a lot that day too.

It was interesting to know your opinions on the experience and also know more about everyone's cultural background. Tom, I remember you told us about the tea leaves from your home. I was fascinated by your account. Although we are both Chinese, we are still able to learn new things from one another.

I am looking forward to our future gatherings. If there is any place you are interested in or would like to go, please feel free to tell me.

Best wishes,  
Eva



# Part-time Kings and Queens

Ma Yin Lam, Cheryl  
Laws, Year 5



How do you pay for your lunch? Using pocket money, loans, scholarships, or the salary you earn through doing part-time jobs? Many students at HKU have different part-time jobs, financing their meals, printing fees and even the clothes they wear to school. Dialogue talked to five students who work after school to support the expenses of their university education.

As adults, students are aware that they have to learn to become financially independent. "It is more appropriate to spend the money I earn myself, rather than relying on my parents," said Claire Law, a third-year Music and Sociology student, who gives saxophone lessons, works as an assistant in a public relations company and tutors students.

Some students' parents help cover basic expenses such as school fees, travel costs and food. As for clothing, entertainment or overseas travel, "they are not necessary spending and I will finance them myself by doing part-time jobs" said Alice Fok, a third-year Music and Translation student, who gives piano lessons and tutors primary and secondary school students.

However, some students have to work out of necessity. Apart from tutoring students, Christopher Ho, a fifth-year Government and Laws student, financed his tuition and expenses during his exchange studies in Canada last year by working as a Research Assistant at HKU and a translator for a human resources consultant firm, and also by the interest he earned through holding shares in HSBC!

Tutoring is a popular choice as the hourly rate is high and the hours are flexible, but some students opt for other jobs. "Tutoring requires a lot

of preparation. I need to photocopy suitable teaching materials for my students," said Beatrice Lau, a third-year Medical Engineering student, "there was also double pressure when my students were preparing for their exams which often coincided with mine." Now, she has turned to a wide array of part-time jobs such as being a Research Assistant in various faculties and departments in HKU and an assistant for a number of organisations.

Although part-time jobs may be strenuous, students benefit from gaining first-hand working experience. Amy Ha, a second-year Journalism student, successfully established herself in the media industry through actively taking up freelance positions. She is currently writing monthly updates of cultural events for ArtMap, and various marketing reports. In early February, she was part of the video production team in an overnight event "Art Museum and Andy Warhol", and was making a documentary about the relationship between a stationary shop and its boss, for leisure and all by herself.

"I did not expect to 'build up myself' as such in the media field," said Amy, "I got paid for my first job and I carried on with all the opportunities that come to me afterwards." She described some of the jobs as easy and monotonous while some were challenging. "I get a glimpse of how my life in the future will be," said Amy determinedly, "as I prefer working as a freelancer to staying in an office from 9-5."

Apart from helping in defining clearer career goals, work exposure also helps students realise the disparity between their dream jobs and reality. The public relations industry, for example, is one often depicted as glamorous. However, "it is very tough. It is like forging a war when the promotion events are in progress," recounted Claire, "one has to be very careful not to make a mistake, not to utter something stupid, and not to miss a word the team leader said, or else the consequence would be dire." Being thrown in the deep end, Claire was warned about the competitive edge to business relationships. "I was told not to trust people easily," said Claire. She appreciated the advice while also lamenting the difficulty of meeting a real friend in the working world.

As for students who tutor primary and secondary students, they have also gained invaluable skills. "Negotiation skills are deployed when communicating with the parents and dealing with difficult kids," said Alice. She commented that some kids were pampered so much that they lose their temper easily, and some parents were so anxious about

the progress of the tuition that they kept peeping from behind the classroom door. Alice maintained her poise and persuaded one parent that her child could learn to be independent only if she could leave her child alone with the tutor.

Aristotle once said, "The roots of education are bitter but the fruit is sweet." Christopher Ho understood the sweetness once he gained satisfaction from the tutoring experience. "I love the humanities, especially Chinese Literature, Chinese History and Government and Public Affairs. I would delve into books about writing theories and pedagogy, make my own notes and share them with my students,"

Christopher smiled at his love of knowledge and the achievement in enlightening the youngsters.

For others, the sweetness lies in the freedom gained through the money earned: Beatrice saved up for a trip to Japan and Korea last year; Claire used her earnings to finance her own saxophone lessons and necessary supplies like the reeds for her instrument; Alice used the money to purchase clothing such as the pretty dress she was wearing on the day of this interview! One sentiment seemed to be agreed by all -- "It feels good to earn my own money and do what I want with it without restraint."



## Get a Job!

**CEDARS-** Careers and Placement offers services for students in career planning, training as well as job hunting.

**Job Postings-** Hundreds of job notices and shortlist announcements are posted through Daily Job & Career Notices email, Latest Announcement page [www.hku.hk/careers/NEW/news.html](http://www.hku.hk/careers/NEW/news.html) as well as poster sites on the campus

**NETjobs-** an exclusive online job board for HKU students and graduates, where employers advertise job opportunities. Visit [cedars.hku.hk/cp/NETjobs](http://cedars.hku.hk/cp/NETjobs) and log in with your HKU portal account name and password.

**NETmatch** - a common platform where students and graduates can post their resumes and employers can select suitable candidates in a speedy manner. Upload your profile to [cedars.hku.hk/cp/NETmatch](http://cedars.hku.hk/cp/NETmatch) now!

**JJIS** - Joint Institution Job Information System is a one-stop online career service for employers and university students developed by the career centres of universities in Hong Kong. Students can open an account with HKU email address at [www.jjis.org.hk](http://www.jjis.org.hk)

More career related events, such as campus recruitment, overseas internships, careers fairs, career consultation, CEO talks, graduate sharing etc. can be found on CEDARS-Careers and Placement webpage: [cedars.hku.hk/cp](http://cedars.hku.hk/cp)



# Have Your Cake – but Don't Eat It!

Jiang Ziyi, Patrick  
Laws, Year 2

Are you on a diet? Does your mouth water when you see chocolate cake at Starbucks, or when someone mentions waffles? How can anyone resist the temptation to gobble up irresistible food without regretting it later on?

This was the topic of Dr. See Yew Hong, Christopher's three-minute talk during the International FameLab Hong Kong competition, held by the British Council in February 2013. The competition aims to encourage scientists and engineers to communicate their work to the world. Dr. See's choice of topic and his engaging presentation won him the Grand Prize, Audience Choice Award, and a trip to the UK in June to participate in the International Grand Final.

According to Dr. See, the key to controlling your desires is a certain neurotransmitter in your brain. Research has shown that exposing yourself to something you don't like over a long period of time can result in more of these neurotransmitters being released when you want to control your desires.

Dr. See, who is a medical doctor by profession and currently a PhD student at the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, is researching in the area of medical education. He believes that scientists (including doctors) should not only possess research and critical thinking skills, but also good presentation skills. "That is what makes me join the competition, since what FameLab is about fit with my idea that doctors should also be good presenters," he says.

Having taught medical students at universities in the UK before coming to Hong Kong, Dr. See says that as a doctor, his job is to ease the suffering of patients, and as a teacher, his job is to ease the suffering of students. He believes that in medical education the traditional lecture format may not be the best method of learning for all students, but both the students and teachers have grown accustomed to this way of teaching and learning. Apart from using new methods in teaching such as films, the presentation and delivery skills of the lecturer are highly important in making sure the students actually 'get' what is being taught.

Dr. See graduated from the University of Cambridge with degree in medicine and surgery, and was the youngest recipient of the Excellent Teacher Award at Manchester University Medical School.

While in private practice, Dr. See was helping individual patients, but here at HKU, by researching in the area of medical education, he believes he would be helping many more – by ensuring that future doctors get a good education.



# Fencing Champions!

Chum Xiao Tong, Hazel  
Government & Laws, Year 2

On March 17, the HKU Ladies Fencing (Sabre) Team walked out of the University Sports Federation Hong Kong (USFHK) Fencing Competition with the champion's trophy in their hands. According to teammate Chan Ho Yan, their victory was completely unexpected. The opposing teams were comprised of both Hong Kong Team representatives and Olympic fencers, while the HKU team only had three girls who specialised in sabre fencing, and one on reserve who was actually an épée fencer. The team had entered the competition with a view to having the chance to play with some of the best fencers in Hong Kong. All four girls tried their best in every match, and managed to emerge victorious at the end.

If there is one word that could be used to describe the sport of fencing, it would be "fast." Speed and precision are key to a successful attack. The sport is divided into three types, named after the weapons used: foil, sabre, and épée. For sabre fencing, the fencer is only awarded points if he or she hits the upper part of the body, even though they are allowed to hit with any part of the weapon. For épée fencing, only touching with the tip will score points, but almost the entire body is fair game.

For all types of fencing, weighing up the risk factor is probably the most difficult part. The fencer must be confident enough to attack, even though playing defence may be easier. From teammate Wan Pui Yin, Jacqueline's perspective, overcoming a defeatist state of mind is the most challenging part. Teamwork plays an important role in fencing—while watching a teammate's match, teammates can shout out tips and advice about their opponents' strategies, helping the team win as a whole. However, if one person constantly worries about letting the team down, it can be difficult for them to play their best game. Support from teammates is definitely something the HKU girls consider crucial to their victory.

The ladies fencing team practice for about three hours twice a week, and one of them continues her training at the Hong Kong Sports Institute. Although it can be tiring to balance fencing with other aspects of university life, the girls believe it is definitely worth it. The HKU Ladies Fencing Team have learned to never underestimate themselves: otherwise, they would never have realised what they are truly capable of.





# Rewarding Golden Services Dialogue Editorial ●●●

The seven committee members of the Golden Z Club (HKUSU session 2011-2012) spent a year organising nine service projects with diverse targets and big ideas, earning the team second place at the Zonta International Emma L Conlon Service Awards.

Zonta International is a worldwide organisation working towards the advancement of the status of women worldwide, the promotion of justice and the universal respect of human rights on three levels: school, community and international. The service awards aim to acknowledge the projects and programmes done by affiliated Zonta clubs around the world.

"We are a small team of seven and this honour is a great recognition of our effort," says Tsang King Yi, Elina, President of the Club. Volunteering is always rewarding, but to the team, the joy of pulling off successful events and the true friendships amongst Executive Committee members make the services truly special.

In order to promote the status of women, the club organised a mentoring program that initiated dialogues between successful professional women and students, a public forum that invited the audience to reflect on the roles of women in Hong Kong; and cabinet member Ho Lok Hin spread the message of ending violence against women on a t-shirt design which was later featured in a United Nations' design campaign.

The team was also involved in child services. They arranged a performance by kids with hyperkinetic disorder in the hope of boosting their self-esteem; they helped organise a big-scale fun fair with the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in the less privileged Tin Shui Wai region; and they arranged a HKU campus tour for around 50 primary school students from the region.

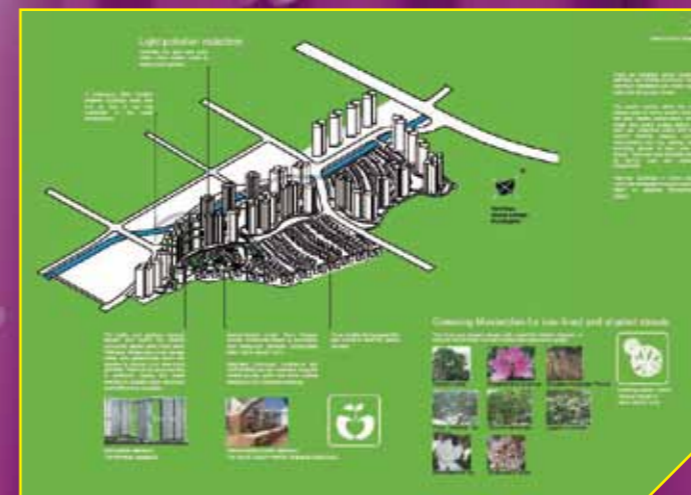
"We wanted to show them that getting into a university isn't an impossible dream," says Elina. The children were excited about travelling to the other side of the city. They were inspired to study hard after being given a taste of university life.

The biggest challenge the team faces is student participation, as HKU students have busy schedules and there are countless activities going on around the campus. They have to be creative in making the event relevant to current social issues as well as sound fun.

"There are so many service groups at HKU, persuading students to join ours could sometimes be a challenge. We hope they may see the service as a fun, social gathering at first, and after tasting the joy volunteering brings, they will be inspired to return and serve with genuine, compassionate hearts," says Elina.



# Home Sweet Home Qi Qi, Mia Arts, Year 2 ●●●



"Home Sweet Home" is an innovative architectural project designed by two Master students for the "BEC Low-Carbon Home Competition 2012", organised by the Business Environment Council. The creativity shown by the team in blending green concepts into a dense residential district in Zhongshan, Guangdong was recognised with the achievement of the Gold Award and Feasibility Award.

The students were given a patch of unexcavated land in Zhongshan and asked to design and create a low-carbon residential area. They were to incorporate features that would decrease the carbon footprint of those living in the densely populated residential buildings into their design.

As part of the team's concept, buildings were designed to have not just one but three "green rooftops". Residents could enjoy having access to a piece of greenery in the cityscape while having more opportunities to interact with their neighbours through the use of the rooftop parks. Urban farms were planned to encourage community-based and low-carbon food production for domestic consumption.

The town was inter-connected via cycling paths and low-carbon mass transportation systems such as electronic transit vehicles and buses. The team opted to use special building materials that ensure high insulation, and carefully placed windows to maximise natural light and wind collection. High-rise and low-rise buildings were arranged to form a continuous wind corridor allowing free air flow. Wind turbines were installed on the rooftops of high-rise buildings while grey water was directed to a water treatment system.

"Architecture is like math," said Chen Gaoxiang, Ivan, Master of Landscape Architecture second-year student. "We just need to find out a strategy to tackle the problem at hand." Before coming to HKU for his Masters degree, Ivan worked as an architect for almost four years in Shanghai and Hong Kong, and met his co-designer, Kan Cheung Heng, Alvin, who was an intern at the office. Ivan's work experience enabled him to provide more practical points of view while Alvin, still a full-time student, pushed the plan forward to achieve the ideal outcome.

Throughout the competition, not only did the team become more practical in designing their model with real-life situations in mind, they also learned that the low-carbon way of life is slowly making its way into every part of society. They hope that their ideas used in the low-carbon project will be implemented and seen around residential areas in the future.





## A Promise of Love

Dialogue Editorial ●●●

During a trip to Cambodia, a simple promise brought PhD student Zhang Ying Ying, Cherry to an orphanage. After witnessing the poor living conditions of the children there, she decided to initiate a project to improve water quality and hygiene awareness in orphanages in Cambodia.

Together with five other HKU students, Cherry set up Children's Health, Education and Environment Rescue Association (CHEER). Their first project is "Better Health, Better Lives, Better Future" (BBB). For 11 days in the summer of 2012, a team of 17 student volunteers visited two orphanages in Siem Reap, Cambodia. They built a long-lasting water purification and storage system, performed basic health checks on the children, educated the children about personal hygiene and simple first aid techniques, and donated daily necessities from various charities in Hong Kong.

Project BBB was awarded the 2012 Best Student and Youth Volunteering Project in a competition organised by the Government's Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service.

The team was grateful to have got support from the HKU SERVICE 100 Fund to kickstart the project. Founding committee member of CHEER, PhD student Wei Lai, Larry, believed the BBB project would benefit beyond the two orphanages they visited. "After the trip, volunteers not only plan to continue volunteering; some have even initiated their own service projects. The service spirit spreads exponentially."

For founding member Tang Chun Yin, Mike, what makes BBB truly special is making improvements that last, such as building a water purifier and planning follow-up works. Mike was able to support the team from Hong Kong by covering administrative tasks while his teammates set out for Cambodia. "Someone has to do these jobs; this is what team work is about. We have the same goal. I shared the pride and passion when seeing the project flourish."

Founding member Cheung Kwok Fan, Stephen, a Biomechanical Science graduate, was rather clueless when he was assigned the task of building the water tank and purifier. The team had to learn how to handle bricks and build the structures from a helpful mason.

Through the use of simple English and body language, the team also built friendships with the Cambodian children. "One girl got very attached to me, and it was heartbreaking when she learnt we were about to leave and cried," says volunteer Wong Quin Ee, Queenie, "I can't wait to meet her again."

The team will return to the orphanages for a follow up project, BBB2. They will be setting up a purifier for a water well and teaching the orphans efficient farming. "We also look forward to an epic mud war after the heavy rain like last time," added Larry.



## Keep Breaking Records!

Dialogue Editorial ●●●

Year one Bachelor of Science (Exercise and Health) student Hui Wai Hei, Ricky, broke his own Hong Kong record in the Men's Javelin Throw by 59.93 metres last February at the Hong Kong Amateur Athletic Association's Xtep Hong Kong Athletics League 2013 (Round 1).

Despite being a record holder, Ricky is considered rather new to this event, as he only started taking the sport seriously about two years ago. He was associated more with tennis at first, as he started playing tennis at the age of five and had been a youth representative of the Hong Kong Tennis Team since the age of 12.

Although Ricky's only javelin experience was from inter-secondary school competitions, his team coach believed his javelin career would have huge potential, and encouraged Ricky to undergo regular training. After just a year of serious training, Ricky first broke the Hong Kong Javelin Throw record last September, and is now a member of the Hong Kong Athletics Team.

"The record is a great achievement, but it also adds pressure. Expectations rise. People don't ask if I win or lose in a competition, but whether I have broken the record again," he says.

Ricky is now more widely known for his success in javelin, but he hasn't given up on tennis yet; he won the Hong Kong National Tennis Championship 2012 Men's B Double Champion. "I love playing tennis," he says, "I've been practicing tennis for so long, it's become a part of me."

While he likes the ever-changing game play in tennis, the repetitiveness of javelin doesn't bore him; he finds it challenging. "In just seconds, I have to manoeuvre so many muscles in my body to perform a dedicate chain of action. A tiny misjudgement in timing or angle or force can have huge results."

Ricky has been striving towards a balance between school, and two competitive sports. Every week, he has four four-hour javelin training sessions and three three-hour tennis sessions. On Saturdays he spends the whole day training for both sports. But even on Sundays, Ricky can often be found on the tennis court.

To Ricky, the secret to success is to have a strong belief in your goal and be persistent. "I have a four-year plan for my sports career. My goal for javelin is to set a new record of 70m and qualify for the 2014 Asian Games," he says. "Also, I have promised my parents to always put my studies first," he added.



# Passing On the Passion for Poetry

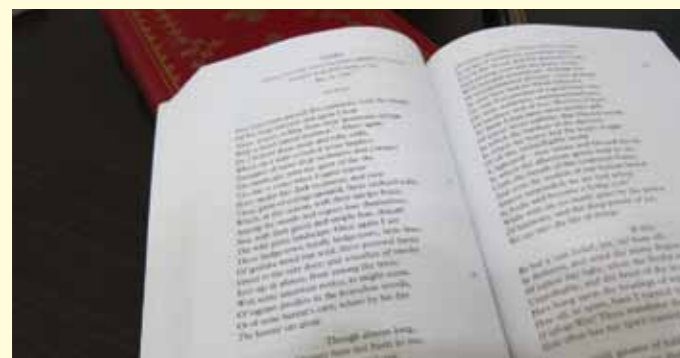
Jiang Ziyang, Patrick  
Laws, Year 2

Poetry. It's a word we all know – but how many people are actually aware of what this one word encompasses? For those who think that English- language poetry has no relevance to Hong Kong students, you may be surprised to know that HKU has, since many years ago, played an important role in nurturing local Anglophone poets. Dialogue talks to Professor Elaine Ho of the School of English on the stories of HKU poets.

Professor Elaine Ho teaches courses on poetry and Anglophone Hong Kong literature at HKU, and believes that the University has been and still is a nurturing ground for new generations of Hong Kong writers and poets.

The University of Hong Kong is known for being the oldest institution of higher learning in Hong Kong and (as the Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese) the alma mater of Dr Sun Yat-sen, among others. Some people may be familiar with various significant moments in the history of HKU (for example, how the roof of the Main Building was blasted off during the Second World War and had to be reconstructed), but fewer people know of the significance HKU played in relation to Hong Kong literature – including poetry – in English.

One of the earliest English Hong Kong poets was Robert (R. K. M.) Simpson, professor of English at the University from 1921 to the 1950s. R. K. M. Simpson's poetry was very much about everyday life in Hong Kong – one of his poems included a description of the constant drilling and road renovations in Hong Kong back in the 20s and 30s as being reminiscent of the explosions in the First World War.

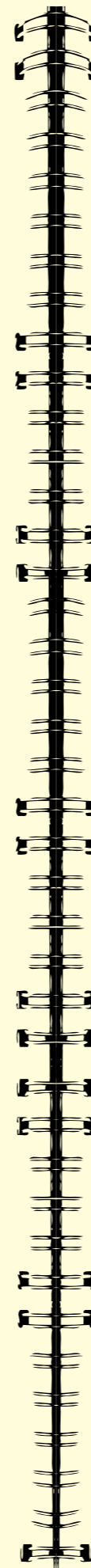


His vignettes gave a perspective on Hong Kong life which was not reflected in any official colonial records, at least not from a personal viewpoint, and the drilling that he complained about is still very much a part of life in urban areas to this day. The poems were a record of the human impact on the environment, and a glimpse at the life of an expatriate in Hong Kong. They also, through examples like the comparison between the drilling and the First World War, connected the small island of Hong Kong with the wider world.

Another important literary figure in Hong Kong English poetry is Edmund Blunden, professor of English Literature at the University in the 1950s and 60s. Prior to his appointment he was already an accomplished writer, and through his position in the Department of English he encouraged poetry reading, recitals and creative writing activities among the students, both in the Department and throughout the University. It was because of Blunden's influence and presence in Hong Kong that a whole generation of students became interested in poetry and started to write pieces of their own, including Mrs Anson Chan who was a graduate of the Department of English.

Harry Ricketts, an expatriate who was born in Hong Kong, came back to teach at the University of Hong Kong in the 1970s. Also being a poet, his work was influenced not only by his life in Hong Kong, but also by his readings of colonial literature – about the British colonies that still remained at that time – which served to connect Hong Kong to the wider world.

For a long time, the University was the only place in Hong Kong to study English literature, and it served as a base for English-language creative writing in Hong Kong. HKU has maintained this reputation over the years, and offered the first degree programme in English creative writing (Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing in English) in Hong Kong.



Professor Ho, noting that at HKU there is less of an emphasis on traditional style (Shakespearean sonnets, for example) and more acceptance of different sub-genres of writings, says the most important thing is to get more people to actually start writing in English. The important thing is to take the first step – quality will come later with more practice and refinement.

*'If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?'*

–Emily Dickinson



Professor Elaine Ho from the School of English

## 'Slam Poetry' – In Search of Artistic Expression

Jiang Ziyang, Patrick  
Laws, Year 2

Poetry is not limited to the sonnets of Shakespeare and the classic works taught in English Literature classes. There are new forms of modern poetry, like slam poetry, that are reaching a whole new generation. Dialogue talks to cultural activist MC Yan for his views on the emerging form of artistic expression.

MC Yan: artist, musician, lyricist. But he doesn't refer to himself by any of those labels – he prefers the term 'cultural activist'. A native of Hong Kong, MC Yan studied visual arts in France, and returned to Hong Kong in 1997. Having held his own art exhibition and started his own band with like-minded friends, he also experimented with 'slam poetry', or spoken-word poetry.

Slam poetry has its origins in Chicago, USA, among the African-American communities, with the word form as the main focus of the performance. It has close ties to hip-hop music, rap, and African-American culture. MC Yan considers it a 'higher form' of rap due to the attention paid to poetic language, as compared to rap lyrics.

When 'poetry' is mentioned, most people might think of *Tang poems*, *Song Ci*, or perhaps Shakespeare's sonnets, William Wordsworth or Robert Frost. But slam poetry is definitely poetry; a modern, alternative form of poetry performance, says MC Yan. Slam poetry is, in his eyes, a product of modern urban culture integrated with more traditional forms of poetry.

Slam poetry originated as a form of expression among African-Americans regarding problems associated with urbanisation – especially the hardships experienced by those living on the margins of society. 'Poetry slams' – performances of spontaneous recital of poetry – were a form of expression and release, through employing words in a lyrical manner.

How is slam poetry different from rap or hip-hop lyrics? The difference lies in the former's spontaneity and the fact that it is free from the 'constraints' of music. Many modern popular songs have lyrics written by a lyricist, tailored to fit the separately recorded instrumentals. Apart from the commercially-oriented nature of such lyrics, the focus of the song becomes the music, rather than the words, which are themselves an art form.

The spontaneity of slam poetry means it has no constraint in content as long as it is in poetry form – rhyming words in a certain metre. MC Yan has no problem with employing 'dirty words' or profanity in slam poetry – indeed, it is a tribute to the origins of the sub-genre itself. As a cultural activist, he sometimes employs the slam poetry form for criticism of current issues, social attitudes and the modern life. 'People nowadays are just following authority without questioning. And authority doesn't just mean those in power, but also things that control us, like money and consumerism. We're so used to this we don't even notice it.' Slam poetry seems an apt way of conveying such messages: 'People need to be tolerant of double meanings – not everything means what it first appears to mean. When engaging with creative works, especially sub-cultures, we need to hold an open attitude.'

MC Yan obviously holds language in high esteem, but he thinks people in today's society are only using language for necessary communication,



Cultural activist MC Yan considers slam poetry a product of modern urban culture integrated with more traditional forms of poetry

and are failing to appreciate language as art. The word form, when used poetically and artistically, can transcend space and time; we don't have to limit language to mundane everyday communication.

Although slam poetry originated in the United States, its popularity has spread to other parts of the world. As a fluent Francophone, MC Yan has hosted slam poetry workshops in France. When asked about the development of slam poetry in Hong Kong, MC Yan says that although there are differences between African-American and Hong Kong culture, the underlying form that is slam poetry transcends cultural differences. It is a shame, he says, that there is so little space in Hong Kong for artistic creation – where there is no space, there is less interaction between different forms of art which may give rise to sub-cultures such as slam poetry.

For any aspiring poets, MC Yan offers some advice: specific 'language' is used in specific environments, for example, in wet markets, in malls, in schools. To create something, one must first be an observer. Open your eyes and ears to the world around you, immerse yourself in it, feel, and absorb. Keep an open mind at all times. Then, you will be ready for the creation of your own piece of art.



Examples of TV series of poetry slam in the US and France.

