

Honorary Doctor of Business Administration

Mr YU Kwok-chun

Citation written and delivered by Professor Roderick WONG Sue-cheun

Mr Pro-Chancellor:

“His words are worth more than a thousand books.” Listening to Mr Yu Kwok-chun’s life story and struggles is as inspiring as having an important lesson in life.

Hong Kong overseas Chinese leader Mr Yu Kwok-chun is currently the Chairman of the Yue Hwa Group and Chairman of Yue Hwa Chinese Products Emporium Limited. Mr Yu’s family came from the city of Meizhou in Guangdong province. He was born in Indonesia, and came to Hong Kong with his father at the age of nine. After he graduated from primary school, he went to Australia to continue his studies. In 1974, he returned to Hong Kong and started working for Yue Hwa, a department store founded by his father. In the past few decades, there have been many changes and challenges, such as the financial crisis, economic restructuring, emigration trends and other changes inside and outside China. However, he was able to lead the company through these challenges, and took advantage of the opportunities to offer a new range of products to better serve customers.

Mr Yu has always followed this motto: “Grow with the times, support society, and serve our customers”. He courageously pushed for reform, and developed Yue Hwa into the massive retail group that it is today. Shortly after Mr Yu took over the business, there was a financial crisis. To strengthen confidence in Chinese goods, he expanded the business while his competitors downsized. He opened more stores, combined storage, began selling with open shelves. He was a pioneer in using a computer system to manage his business in 1978. It saved a lot of time and manpower, and was unprecedented among department stores in Hong Kong.

In the 1990s, Mr Yu continued to explore and innovate, diversifying Yue Hwa’s businesses. He opened three stores in Singapore and invested in real estate in Canada and Beijing. Today Yue Hwa offers a range of products, in addition to daily merchandise. The stores serve as a platform to promote Chinese and Asian products

and culture, from food and drinks, clothing, medicine, to books and paintings, tea appreciation, arts and crafts. In the past decades, Yue Hwa has held exhibitions for Chinese paintings, pottery, flower art, Thai Fest, Indonesia Fest, Southeast Asian Food Fest, as well as all sorts of special interest classes, combining culture and business opportunities that complement each other.

Mr Yu's passion for Chinese culture is deep-rooted and was cultivated by his father. To make sure he learned about his country, his father took him to mainland China before he went to Australia, which strengthened Mr Yu's feelings towards his hometown. While he was studying overseas, his father had him write letters in Chinese to let him know how he was doing. Although he had been out of the country, his emotional ties with Hong Kong and mainland China deepened, and he was imbued with an urge to contribute to his motherland ever since.

Mr Yu understands the connections between Hong Kong and mainland China, and the role he should be playing as a leader of overseas Chinese. He follows the concept of "contributing to society with what you have earned from it", and he takes it as a responsibility to strengthen the connections between Hong Kong and mainland China. As well as developing his own business, Mr Yu is dedicated to serving Hong Kong and mainland communities. He holds multiple positions in public service, including being a Standing Committee Member of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and a Standing Committee Member of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, Hong Kong. He has also held other positions such as Chairman of the HKSAR Small and Medium Enterprises Committee and member of the Trade and Industry Advisory Board. Mr Yu also founded the Federation of Hong Kong Guangdong Community Organisations Limited, and founded the Hong Kong Federation of Overseas Chinese Associations with a friend. Under his leadership, many Hong Kong and mainland China residents have benefited from charity events organised by the two organisations. He was made a Justice of the Peace and received a Silver Bauhinia Star and a Gold Bauhinia Star from the HKSAR Government in 1998, 1999 and 2006 respectively in recognition of his contributions to society.

Mr Yu has a lot of hope and faith for the future of Hong Kong. He still remembers the impact of SARS in 2003. Many businesses were affected. The sentiment was very negative in Hong Kong. However, even under such difficult circumstances, Hong Kong still managed to breakthrough with perseverance. Mr Yu cares about the development of young people and he encourages them with this perseverance. He

believes that young people are energetic and creative, and can become a major force for development. He hopes that they will have big dreams, but be down to earth at the same time, work more, and participate in all kinds of activities to show their leadership skills, their concerns and responsibility for society, and bring a unique and positive energy to contribute to the country and society.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, Mr Yu Kwok-chun has excellent business sense and tactics. He is humble and persistent, and has been able to grow his business during the good times and remain calm during the tough times. He is able to seize every opportunity, and move forward with the times. Although he grew up overseas, his heart and soul lie in Hong Kong. His passion for Chinese culture makes him an advocate. He appeals as a leader of overseas Chinese, dedicated to serving society. When faced with challenges in the development of Hong Kong, he urges all parties to be understanding of one another and work together. His optimism and persistence make him a role model for young people. I request City University of Hong Kong to award Mr Yu an Honorary Doctor of Business Administration, as recognition of his contributions.