

## **Honorary Fellow Mr Wong Chun-hong**

*Citation written and delivered by Professor Matthew Lee Kwok-on*

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President:

Flowers come to blossom in a thousand ways just as people can have different countenances. In the eyes of many, Mr Wong Chun-hong, Executive Director, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Top Spring International Holdings Limited, is a visionary and resolute businessman who navigates between Hong Kong and the mainland with the ease of fish swimming through water. But if you have a chance to hear him speak of the heroic deeds of his parents, Mr Wong Cheung and Mrs Wong Lo Hui-yuet, and other members of his family during the resistance movement against Japan during the Second World War, you will see that Mr Wong is a man with a sense of mission who sets great store by human emotions and integrity.

Mr Wong was born in Hong Kong in the 1950s, grew up on the mainland – doing so as an eighth-generation Hongkonger – and returned to Hong Kong to work in the 1980s. After he had established his business in Hong Kong, he proceeded to develop it on the mainland. He is, therefore, truly a Hongkonger living on the mainland, or a mainlander living in Hong Kong. His ancestors lived in Hong Kong for eight generations, and his mother is from the Lo family of Hakka ancestry that settled in Sha Tau Kok. His grandfathers on both the paternal and maternal sides were well-off. Not only did his father and uncles all receive a good education, with some going as far as the level of university, even his mother had some schooling, which paved the way for her to participate in the war against Japanese aggression as the head of a communications station in the guerrilla network. In those days, Mr Wong's father as well as the uncles on the Wong and Lo branch of the family were planning to go abroad to carry on with their family businesses, but upon learning about the atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers in Nanjing, they were so indignant that they made up their mind to fight when the Japanese invaded Hong Kong. Mr Wong's siblings and in-laws,

numbering over a dozen, joined the Hong Kong–Kowloon Independent Brigade of the East River Column Guerrillas, the resistance force organised by Hong Kong people. Their efforts brought to the Lo family the honour of the “First Hongkonger Family to Fight in the Resistance War against the Japanese”. When he speaks of the deeds of his forebears, Mr Wong is deeply impressed with the role that the Lo family played in the Big Rescue Campaign in 1941 when more than 700 cultural celebrities, including He Xiangni, Mao Dun, and Zou Taofen, together with over 80 British and American prisoners-of-war, were saved from the clutches of the Japanese. The Hong Kong–Kowloon Independent Brigade fought dozens of battles against the Japanese army, and carried out various actions, to protect their families and homeland.

Owing to family tradition perhaps, Mr Wong, who had dreamed of becoming a scientist when he was little, persisted in his honest and pragmatic ways even after he stumbled into the world of trade. In 1984, he took part in the founding of Rainbow Department Store Company, Ltd., thus becoming one of the leaders in China’s retailing sector, and participated in the establishment of famous brand names such as Fu Lin Men Cooking Oil and Great Wall Wines. In 1989, he was involved in real estate development in Shenzhen and Hong Kong. From 2002, he developed properties in cities across the mainland, and excelled himself in real estate, finance as well as retailing sectors.

Over the years, true to his principle of integrity, and his goal of “doing good rather than doing big”, he has sought to develop boutique houses such as those well-known commercial property projects such as Shuixie Huadu, Laimeng Shuixieshan, and Laimeng Shuixie Spring, with quality far exceeding similar products from his competitors. Mr Wong regards himself as half businessman, half artist. Only then can he incorporate his artistic vision in the design of his houses and parks. Looking to the future, Mr Wong says that with the sale of over 20 billion yuan in mainland assets from Top Spring International Holdings over the past two years, he will return to the real estate sector in Hong Kong. Guided by the corporate belief that time is the best proof of value, he will anchor himself in Hong Kong, while focusing on potential markets in the Greater Bay Area,

Shanghai and Sydney, Australia. Advancing prudently on a sound business basis, he will actively invest in “property+education”, and other areas.

A passage in the chapter “Liang Hui Wang” in *Mencius* reads, “In such a thing as taking the Tai mountain under your arm, and leaping over the north sea with it, if you say to people ‘I am not able to do it,’ that is a real case of not being able. In such a matter as breaking off a branch from a tree on the orders of a superior, if you say to people, ‘I am not able to do it,’ that is a case of not doing it; it is not a case of not being able to do it”. Mr Wong often claims modestly that he is unsuited to business, but the fact remains that he runs a flourishing enterprise, winning for himself the honour of “Master of Brand Management” and other accolades. That he would not expand wantonly but instead pursue the course of developing boutique apartments is a case of “not doing” rather than “not being able to do”. He holds firm to the idea that wealth and fame are what everyone desires, but a cultivated person would go about obtaining them in a proper way. With the support of his family, he actively participates in public welfare, generously donating to society, especially in education, because he understands that learning can nurture the body and the mind, develop the capacities of reason and intellect, elevate moral standards and change people’s lives. For his contributions to society, the HKSAR Government awarded Mr Wong a Bronze Bauhinia Star in 2016, and the Guangzhou Municipal Government awarded him with Honorary Citizenship of Guangzhou in 2018.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, Mr Chairman of the Council and Mr President, while his unique experience in life makes it necessary for Mr Wong Chun-hong to shuttle back and forth frequently between Hong Kong and mainland China, he maintains a child-like fondness for Hong Kong. CityU has benefited greatly from his generosity. In addition to donating to the University, he is currently a Court Member of the University, a member of the Board of Governors as well as Honorary Patron of the CityU Foundation. In appreciation of his generous donation, the University dedicated a lecture hall, Wong Cheung Lo Hui Yuet Hall, in memory of his parents in 2013. I respectfully request the University to confer upon Mr Wong Chun-hong the Honorary Fellowship.