

Honorary Fellow A Citation



Professor Tam Sheung Wai, GBS, OBE, DSc (Hon), DUniv (Hon), BSc, MSc, PhD, CChem, FRSC, JP

Traditionally a good education is likened to the spring breeze and shower, which nurture growth and aid development. More recently, training in science and technology has been the key to revitalizing the nation; and chemistry, with its alchemical origin, does have the properties to refine and transform. Professor Tam Sheung Wai is an elder statesman in Hong Kong education and a personage of renown in science and technology. Over a long career he devoted himself to education and social service, with achievements that are both extensive and outstanding.

Professor S W Tam was born in 1934 in Hong Kong, and studied in the Diocesan Boys' School. As a sixth-former, he concurrently went to St Paul's Co-educational College for specialized studies in mathematics. After graduation, he was admitted to the University of Hong Kong on the coveted King Edward Scholarship to study Chemistry. He earned his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in 1958 and 1961 respectively. He then pursued postgraduate studies on a Commonwealth Scholarship at the University of Nottingham, where he obtained his PhD in Chemistry in 1964. Professor Tam's specialty consists of organic chemistry, ionic structure and organometallic chemistry, in which he has achieved demonstrable research results.

Professor Tam took up a lectureship at Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, upon returning home in 1965. From then he went on to a distinguished career at the University for over 30 years, having been, successively, Professor of Chemistry, Chair Professor of Chemistry, the Head of Chung Chi College, the Dean of the Graduate School, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. His achievements, which encompassed research, teaching and administration, were all remarkable and today, there are certain members of the University's senior management, who serve as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Head of College and Dean of Science, who, distinguished in their own rights now, were at one time or another brilliant students under the tutelage of Professor Tam.

At the Chinese University, Professor Tam sought to teach by example, and to mould his students into competent chemists, but his contribution was certainly not confined to transforming young talent into scientists and educationists. He had pivotal parts to play in introducing new disciplines to the University, and in the installation of new academic programmes. When he was Dean of the Graduate School (1981–93), it was also the time when the University sought to develop postgraduate studies and related research, and many doctoral programmes came into being during those years. Professor Tam was also the chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the University's Department of Architecture (now the School of Architecture), in which capacity there was a good deal of negotiation and wrangling with the



government authorities on behalf of the University, as well as efforts to balance the interests of all stake-holders. It was a most cumbersome job but Professor Tam did it with so much flair and indefatigable energy he deserved the principal accolade in the project. Much respected for his foresight, Professor Tam is a very approachable individual greatly loved by both colleagues and students. He was appointed a Pro-Vice-Chancellor from 1990 to 1994, and significant progress was made in both teaching and research at the University during his tenure.

Professor S W Tam retired from the Chinese University in 1995 to accept a new challenge in the field of higher education, this being nothing less than the directorship of the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong. During his years in office he made tremendous efforts in developing Distance Learning, in raising the standard of education for people who are in employment, and in promoting adult education so as to give citizens who missed their chance to enter university one more opportunity to avail themselves of a tertiary education. Through his initiative and industry the status of the Open Learning Institute was raised to university level in 1997, and the institution was duly renamed The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). During the eight years he was the President of the Open University, Professor Tam spared no time or energy in pursuing the University's further development in such areas as the reinforcement of the e-learning system, the raising of the general academic standard, and the acquisition of facilities for the campus. His efforts transformed OUHK into one of the largest and most competent open universities in Asia. To acknowledge his splendid achievements and tenacious efforts in advancing its cause over the years, the Open University bestowed on Professor Tam the titles of President Emeritus and Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, in 2003 and 2006 respectively.

Apart from his selfless giving to higher education, Professor Tam is also an enthusiastic supporter of social service and social welfare activities. He has served a good many social welfare organizations, as chairman and as member of their governing bodies. These have included chairmanship of the Council for World Mission/Nethersole Fund, the Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Charity Foundation, the Hospital Governing Committee of the United Christian Hospital, and the Council of St Paul's Co-educational College. A devout Christian, Professor Tam has truly lived out the tenets of the religion he professes, both as an individual and in relation to society, as he closely followed the spirit of "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister".

This year Chung Chi College, one of the founding Colleges of the Chinese University, celebrates its sixtieth anniversary. Professor Tam served Chung Chi since 1965 in more capacities than one. Apart from teaching in the Chemistry Department, he was, for many years, the Warden of Ying Lin Tang, one of the halls of residence on the Chung Chi campus. Even to this day, the anecdotes of Ying Lin Tang during the wardenship of Professor Tam are still fondly remembered and discussed whenever there is a gathering of the hall's former residents. And when there is an opportunity for them to revisit Ying Lin Tang, they invariably have the feeling of home-coming, happily reminiscing about the good old days when the hall was under the guardianship of Professor Tam. Professor Tam also has the distinction of being the only



person who was the President of Chung Chi College (1976-77) and twice the Head of Chung Chi College (1977-81; 1988-90). His association with Chung Chi is time-honoured, and the merits of the institutions he has established are there for all to see. On this happy occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the College, all members of Ying Lin Tang, Chung Chi College and the Chinese University rejoice together in seeing Professor S W Tam going from strength to strength in active retirement, continuing to serve the education sector as well as the community at large, in true pursuit of the spirit of *Ad Excellentiam*.

To celebrate his many years of arduous effort for the public good, his illustrious contribution to and outstanding achievement in the sciences and in education, and in particular his contributions to the Chinese University and the Open University with benevolent significance that will be felt over many years to come, Mr Chairman, may I present Professor Tam Sheung Wai for the award of an Honorary University Fellowship.