

# Honorary Fellow Dr Gary Cheng Faat-ting

*Public Orator Professor Kim Jeong-bon*

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President:

The influential English economist Professor Alfred Marshall expressed in his 1885 inaugural address at the University of Cambridge an ambition to educate people with “cool heads” and “warm hearts” who would commit to the service of the greater good. Dr Gary Cheng Faat-ting, Founder and Managing Director of the Gary Cheng Group, has fully demonstrated that he is in full possession of both qualities. A certified public accountant, chartered tax advisor and qualified insolvency practitioner of long-standing, he is well-known for his self-assurance, mental acuity and discipline. As an active figure in many public organisations, he is an exemplar of human compassion.

In 1994, after his return to Hong Kong from his studies in the US, Dr Cheng joined PricewaterhouseCoopers, one of the Big Four accounting firms in the world. He enjoyed the challenge of his work as an auditor, but seizing on an opportunity in 1998, he started his own CPA firm. The change from working as an employee to running his own business opened up a new horizon for Dr Cheng’s career. From merely completing the assignments handed to him by his supervisors, he now had to oversee all facets of his company’s operations, from hiring people to purchasing furniture and equipment for his offices as well as dealing with clients and the government.

Trying to meet his many work-related demands, Dr Cheng quickly learned the importance of long-term preparation. Failure to plan would mean the demise of his business. As his decisions affected not only himself but many others, such an inopportune event would have been disastrous. In the meantime, he came to realise that crunching numbers was a small part of accountancy. A competent CPA should provide solutions to his clients’ problems. Accordingly, by continuously expanding the scope of his

expertise, Dr Cheng has succeeded in broadening the scope of his business to include taxation, mergers and acquisition, corporate re-structuring and liquidation.

Today, Dr Cheng recalls the help he received when he arrived in Hong Kong aged 11 from his hometown in Fujian. Intent on repaying the society that nurtured him, Dr Cheng is dedicated to improving life in Hong Kong. Not content with only donating money to charitable causes, Dr Cheng strives to introduce systemic changes that will help more people more effectively. For this reason, he has joined the Social Welfare Advisory Committee of the Labour and Welfare Bureau and was an observer of the Independent Police Complaints Council of the Hong Kong Police Force. He has also participated in the Chinese Entrepreneurial Organisation, which features a monthly round-table on policy issues with community and government leaders, in addition to serving as the Charter President of the Lions Club of Huaxia Hong Kong. As a token of his gratitude, Dr Cheng sits on the Council of his alma mater, Buddhist Sin Tak College, where he helps to set up scholarships for promising students.

Dr Cheng earned his Doctor of Business Administration degree from CityU in 2011. Since then, he has been actively involved in the affairs of the University as the former Chairman of CityU's Eminence Society and currently as Honorary Vice-President of the CityU Foundation, and a member of the Court. When HK Tech 300 was launched more than a year ago, Dr Cheng served as a panellist in the HK Tech 300 Angel Fund and Seed Fund selection interviews, offering to provide successful applicants with taxation and accounting advice through his firm while personally mentoring them, too. In appreciation of the support that Dr Cheng and his wife have rendered over the years, the Student Career Centre was renamed the Judith and Gary Cheng Student Career Centre in 2021.

To young people looking to build a career in accounting, Dr Cheng warns of the danger of obsessing over short-term returns, which only engenders short-sightedness. Neither is it advisable to think only of monetary gains. Spiritual rewards that grow from helping others are very often more gratifying.

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council, and President, Dr Cheng's ingenuity has made it possible for him to reconceptualise the practice of accounting in Hong Kong while his persistence and diligence permit him to scale greater heights. With gratitude in his heart, Dr Cheng works conscientiously to create a better environment in Hong Kong, benefitting many, including City University of Hong Kong. May I thus request the University to confer upon Dr Gary Cheng Faat-ting the title of Honorary Fellow.