

Honorary Doctor of Business Administration

Dr Allan ZEMAN

Citation written and delivered by Professor Arthur ELLIS

Chancellor:

Dr Allan Zeman is an entrepreneur, successful businessman, community leader, and visionary. Among his positions are Chairman, Lan Kwai Fong Holdings Limited; Chairman, Ocean Park Corporation; Chairman of Performing Art Committee and Board Member, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority.

Dr Zeman was raised in Montreal, Canada. As a young man, he recognised a business opportunity in importing clothes made in Hong Kong. This eventually led him to relocate to Hong Kong, in 1975. At that time he founded a highly successful business—the Colby International Group—exporting clothes made in China to Canada, USA and the rest of the World.

Many individuals have made their fortunes in Hong Kong. What sets Dr Zeman apart and has endeared him to Hong Kong’s citizens and visitors alike are several initiatives he launched. The first was Lan Kwai Fong. When Dr Zeman arrived in Hong Kong, he astutely noted that Hong Kong lacked the kind of hip restaurants and bars for its professionals that characterise many Western cities. People working in Central typically had to go to hotels to meet for drinks or meals. With his uncanny business sense, Dr Zeman recognised that the Lan Kwai Fong section of Hong Kong had the potential to be a locus of such meeting points.

At the time, Lan Kwai Fong was associated with matchmakers, flower stalls and old warehouses. Many would have been afraid to pursue the transformation envisioned by Dr Zeman in this “fringe” Central district. Undaunted, Dr Zeman saw the promise for supporting a vibrant business community related to dining and entertainment. He opened the California restaurant in 1983, which paved the way for the opening of many other businesses. As Lan Kwai Fong’s reputation grew and Dr Zeman became known as the “Father of Lan Kwai Fong”, Hong Kong began to be perceived as a destination for having fun in addition to its well-deserved reputations for finance, trade

and transport. In short, Dr Zeman completely transformed this area of Hong Kong and enhanced Hong Kong's international reputation in the process. His redevelopment formula has been so successful that other major cities have sought his assistance to revitalise their own urban areas. Dr Zeman's recent achievements include helping establish a Lan Kwai Fong district in Chengdu and constructing others in Mission Hills—Haikou, Wuxi, Ningbo, Hangzhou, and Chongqing. These developments are a tribute to the soundness and versatility of his business methods and his recognising that it is not just the “hardware” represented by buildings that is needed, but the “software”—an appreciation for the culture—as well.

In 2004, Dr Zeman was asked by the Chief Executive at the time, Mr Tung Chee-hwa, to become Chairman of Ocean Park, an operation which had been steadily losing revenue. Leading an extraordinary turnaround, Dr Zeman seized this opportunity to establish a modern vision for a distinctly Asian amusement park. He not only capitalised on Ocean Park's spectacularly scenic location, he also integrated elements of local culture—“the software”, as he puts it—to attract Hong Kong residents as well as visitors. Ocean Park now hosts around 7 million guests annually.

Moreover, Dr Zeman has made Ocean Park an exemplary enterprise in terms of promoting education and sustainability—“from Day One”, as he puts it. Ocean Park is guided by the Brundtland Commission's definition: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Ocean Park promotes conservation through the use of fewer resources used more efficiently; reusing and recycling waste; the application of clean, renewable energy technologies; and life-cycle costing, in which both capital and operational costs are considered when evaluating the park's planning processes. Ocean Park has recently been shortlisted for the Applause Award as one of the top theme parks in the world.

In many ways Dr Zeman personifies City University of Hong Kong's aspirations for its staff and students. This year we launched the Discovery-enriched Curriculum, or DEC. The goal of the DEC is to give every student the opportunity to make an original discovery. In this way students will learn what it means to explore the unknown. We hope that the DEC will enable our students to embrace the unknown, as Dr Zeman has done throughout his career, and to find the opportunities therein by intelligent risk-taking and entrepreneurship. Like Dr Zeman's approach, we want our students to recognise that good ideas have no geographic and disciplinary boundaries.

Given Dr Zeman's many contributions to the tourism industry and to cultural development, it is not surprising that he has been recognised with accolades too numerous to mention. As just a few examples, he is a recipient of both Hong Kong's Gold Bauhinia Star and the Grand Bauhinia Medal, and he has been honoured by leading organisations as businessman and stylemaker of the year. But more than that, he is an ambassador for Hong Kong and one of its finest citizens. Maybe the highest compliment we can pay Dr Zeman is to describe him with the Chinese phrase *jun zi*, 君子, which, like the Yiddish word "mensch", means someone whose humanity shines through in all that he does.

Mr Chancellor, it is an honour and a privilege to present to you Dr Allan Zeman for the conferment of the degree of Honorary Doctor of Business Administration.