

Honorary Fellow Mrs Rebecca Lai Ko Wing-ye

Public orator: Professor Richard M. Walker

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President:

Mrs Rebecca Lai Ko Wing-ye, currently Director of Education Initiatives of the China Graduate School of Theology, has had a long and illustrious career with the Hong Kong Government. For close to a quarter of a century, she worked in different government departments and bureaux, bearing witness to the development of Hong Kong in its critical transition from the last century to the present. Since she left the civil service, she has continued to work for the Hong Kong public in various ways, including serving as a member of the Council of City University of Hong Kong (CityU) from 2012 to 2014.

Mrs Lai considers her work in the civil service as consisting of three important components. First, to ensure sustained social development, she has been actively involved in building the infrastructure of Hong Kong, especially during her postings in the former Finance Branch and at the Tourism Commission when she was involved in the airport and port development, and various tourism attractions, respectively. Secondly, on the human resource side, she has contributed to the former Education and Manpower Branch and Civil Service Bureau by participating in the development of the education system as well as the civil service. Thirdly, during her time at the former Trade Department, the former Financial Services Bureau and Tourism Commission, Mrs Lai experienced first-hand the intricate business of instituting regulatory measures even as she worked to speed up the momentum of economic growth. It is her conviction that one needs to strike a balance between developmental imperative on the one hand and social justice on the other in governmental work. The two are yoked together. For one to thrive, the other cannot be allowed to lag behind.

Mrs Lai's career is thus informed by a strong sense of justice and compassion, which she would like to see cultivated among the future leaders of Hong Kong. At a time when more and more Hong Kong students are engaged in community service, she observes that one should focus on the good that such service brings to the community rather than approaching it merely as a way to expand one's portfolio or build one's curriculum vitae.

It is for this reason that Mrs Lai makes it a point to remind her younger colleagues of the importance of maintaining a down-to-earth outlook, so that they do not lose sight of what propelled them to pursue a career in public service in the first place. As one moves up the social ladder by dint of hard work, it is sometimes easy to forget the very people one originally set out to serve. It is therefore necessary to acquaint or, for those who come from less-than-privileged backgrounds, re-acquaint themselves with the needs and aspirations of people at the grassroots of society. This idea applies not only to civil servants, but also to those in the private sector. Even in marketing terms, if we cannot appreciate the needs and concerns of customers, it is hardly possible to provide the goods and services that they require.

In her capacity as a Council member of CityU, Mrs Lai participated in a full cycle of meetings, in addition to serving on the Finance Committee and Audit Committee, where her generous advice on the annual budget and audit report helped to safeguard the health of University's finances.

Mrs Lai believes that tertiary education in Hong Kong has entered a new era. In addition to training the workforce that society needs, institutions of higher learning nowadays are expected to provide a milieu for the growth of the individual, where students can realise their dreams and develop a sense of self-worth. As she begins a new chapter as an administrator in theological education, Mrs Lai seeks to do the same for her students at the China Graduate School of Theology, where she had served in the roles of Director of Theological Education by Extension and Registrar and Student Affairs Officer.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, Mr Chairman of the Council and Mr President, I present to you Mrs Rebecca Lai Ko Wing-ye for commendation. For her tireless service to the Hong Kong people, her faithful contributions to the University and the far-reaching educational ideals that she preaches and practices, I request you to confer upon her an Honorary Fellowship of City University of Hong Kong.