

Honorary Doctor of Science

Professor David D. HO

Citation written and delivered by Professor Arthur ELLIS

Mr Pro-Chancellor:

Professor David D. Ho is the founding Scientific Director and CEO of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center; and the Irene Diamond Professor at The Rockefeller University in New York. Professor Ho has been widely acknowledged as one of the preeminent HIV/AIDS researchers in the world for more than three decades. He is credited with being the first scientist to recognise the dynamic nature of HIV replication in vivo and with devising the combination anti-retroviral therapy that has stymied the deadly progress of AIDS in many individuals, giving them literally a new lease on life.

Professor Ho overcame many challenges during his youth. When he was six years old and living in the city of Taichung in Taiwan, Professor Ho's father left the family to travel to the US for his graduate studies. It was not until Professor Ho was 12 that the family reunited, this time in California. His uprooting meant that Professor Ho had to master a completely new language and adapt to a markedly different culture. He succeeded in making this demanding transition, earning his BS degree in physics at Caltech and taking his medical training at Harvard Medical School through a scholarship.

While Professor Ho was doing his residency at UCLA in the early 1980s, he saw and documented some of the first cases of AIDS. Seeing the devastating effects of this newly discovered infectious disease prompted him to get involved in AIDS research. Over the following decade, Professor Ho's creative experiments and dogged persistence enabled him to determine key chemical and physical characteristics of the virus. By the mid-1990s, his tireless efforts resulted in the anti-AIDS cocktails that have given hope to many millions of patients. Professor Ho has been quoted as saying "As a scientist, nothing is more thrilling to me than the process of discovery. When the wonder of nature is revealed, one is left breathless and awe-struck".

Professor Ho's extraordinary efforts exemplify what we hope to accomplish with the education that CityU provides. As Professor Ho stated in an interview, "I was at the right place at the right time, having just finished the right type of training, getting ready to do the right type of training that would be relevant to this problem [of AIDS]. Chance does play a very, very important role ... but we have to be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities that are bubbled up by serendipity."

Professor Ho is a role model for CityU especially because of his international perspectives on infectious diseases. He has noted that AIDS "...is a problem for the world and therefore we're going to solve it." Professor Ho has led a consortium of Chinese and American organisations to help address HIV/AIDS issues in China.

It is also fitting that Professor Ho should be joining the CityU academic community in the year that we established Hong Kong's first veterinary school, in partnership with Cornell University. Our School of Veterinary Medicine, which is on track to becoming the first internationally accredited veterinary school in Asia, has identified infectious diseases as one of its research priorities, reflecting Hong Kong's calamitous experiences with such diseases as SARS and avian flu. Professor Ho in fact was invited by the government of the HKSAR to help advise the city's researchers on scientific approaches to developing therapies and vaccines against SARS in 2003. Thus his presence at CityU is a great boost to our new School of Veterinary Medicine as it seeks to make significant contributions to ensuring the health of Hong Kong's citizens by developing a better understanding of how diseases are transmitted between animals and humans. After all, AIDS/HIV is generally thought to have passed into the human population through contact with animals, namely chimpanzees.

Professor Ho has won many prestigious accolades for his seminal research and his exceptional humanitarian activities. In 1996, he was named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year, and he has received 12 honorary doctorates and the Presidential Medal, in 2001, from the US Government. Furthermore, he is a member of Academia Sinica, the Chinese Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine of the US National Academy of Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, Professor Ho's philosophy has served him well throughout his career and provides important lessons for us all. He is guided by the Japanese proverb

that “Vision without action is a dream; action without vision is a nightmare”. Professor Ho believes this mindset is particularly important in confronting demanding problems that require years of dedication and hard work.

For his many inspiring contributions to humanity that combine vision and action, I am greatly honoured to present to you Professor David D. Ho for the conferment of the degree of Honorary Doctor of Science.