

Honorary Fellow Ms Nancy Chau Sin-wo



Public Orator Professor Lin Feng

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President:

Upon meeting Ms Nancy Chau Sin-wo for the first time, people tend to be surprised to discover that, for all her ardent support for education, she has not had the benefit of a formal education. Known for her legendary generosity to schools and universities in Hong Kong and on the Mainland, Ms Chau was deprived of the chance of schooling because she contracted polio when she was three years old. So she deeply recognises the importance of education and understands what it can do to change a person's life.

Born and raised in Sichuan, Ms Chau came to Hong Kong alone in the 1980s. The neon lights of the Hong Kong cityscape dazzled her. It was a far cry from her hometown in Sichuan where the streets grew pitch dark as soon as the sun set. Not knowing Cantonese, the most commonly spoken language in Hong Kong, it was all too understandable that her struggle for survival in this city was daunting. With nobody to turn to, she started out as a domestic helper and subsequently tried other lines of work, including working as a kitchen hand in a restaurant and a worker on the assembly line in a garment factory. Ms Chau was not afraid of hardship and she worked relentlessly to improve herself. With persistence and ingenuity, she gradually learned enough about the garment and textile industries to start a factory, and eventually, she built her own career.

Many people regard this story as a model for successful immigrants, an embodiment of the Lion Rock Spirit, the indefatigable will to overcome obstacles, and a tireless drive to do one's best. She believes that on this piece of "blessed land", as she calls Hong Kong, everyone, regardless of their background, gets a fair deal, and a person's effort is consistently recognised. She remembers the days when she worked in the back restaurant kitchen, where her primary job was to wash the dishes brought back from the dining area. The little mound of dirty dishes seemed to get ever higher by the minute, but Ms Chau often found herself singing as she scrubbed them one by one, as she fully knew that her hard work would be rewarded at the end of the day. In that restaurant kitchen, she found the meaning of work and came to enjoy the sense of accomplishment that comes with such tasks.

After she entered the commercial world, however, she suffered losses in her business transactions because of her lack of knowledge. Her difficulties seemed compounded when she even had business taken from her. This experience was a painful reminder of what she had missed for not having benefited from formal schooling. It also made her realise that the road to success is often paved with failures.

Having made her fortune, Ms Chau decided to repay society that has given her the opportunity to prosper. Supporting education became the focus of her philanthropic enterprise. At CityUHK, Ms Chau has generously donated to promote advancement, establishing an endowment fund for the Chau Sin Wo Scholarships in the School of Law. In appreciation of her staunch support, CityUHK dedicated a room in her honour, naming it "Chau Sin Wo Classroom". Ms Chau is now the Honorary Vice-President of the CityUHK Foundation, lists CityUHK as a beneficiary in her will and promotes CityUHK's Endowment Campaign among her relatives and friends, ensuring that her enthusiasm for nurturing the young will continue.

Besides giving to CityUHK, Ms Chau established the Zhou Shanhe Scholarship at the School of Medicine at Tsinghua University and the Chau Sin Wo Scholarship for Medical Students at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). Moreover, she is the Honorary Director of the HKU Foundation and donated \$500,000 to construct a middle school in Jinggangshan, where

she was named honorary headteacher. In addition, she founded a charity in 2014 that nurtures young people.

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council, and President, by dint of her hard work, Ms Nancy Chau Sin-wo has gone from rags to riches. At the height of her success, she adheres to humility. With empathy and gratitude, she makes good use of the wealth that she has accumulated to help those who, like her younger self, fall victim to the circumstances of their birth and upbringing and rewards those who excel in their studies. CityUHK has the excellent fortune of being one of the recipients of her largesse, which makes it possible for students to lighten the financial burden on their families and allows every CityUHK student to appreciate the Lion Rock Spirit that Ms Chau stands for. So, it is my great honour to present Ms Nancy Chau Sin-wo for the conferment of the Honorary Fellowship of City University of Hong Kong.