

Exploring New Horizons

“So it is in travelling, a man must carry knowledge with him if he would bring back knowledge”

Samuel Johnson



“I feel ready for the challenges in front of me.”

Wang Feifei 王菲菲 (BSc (Actuar Sc) year 3)

HKU has long valued and developed its international status. With over 100 international partner institutions and 6 years' experience in its international student exchange programme, the University fully recognises the vital role played by international exchange, to both the students and the institutions taking part.

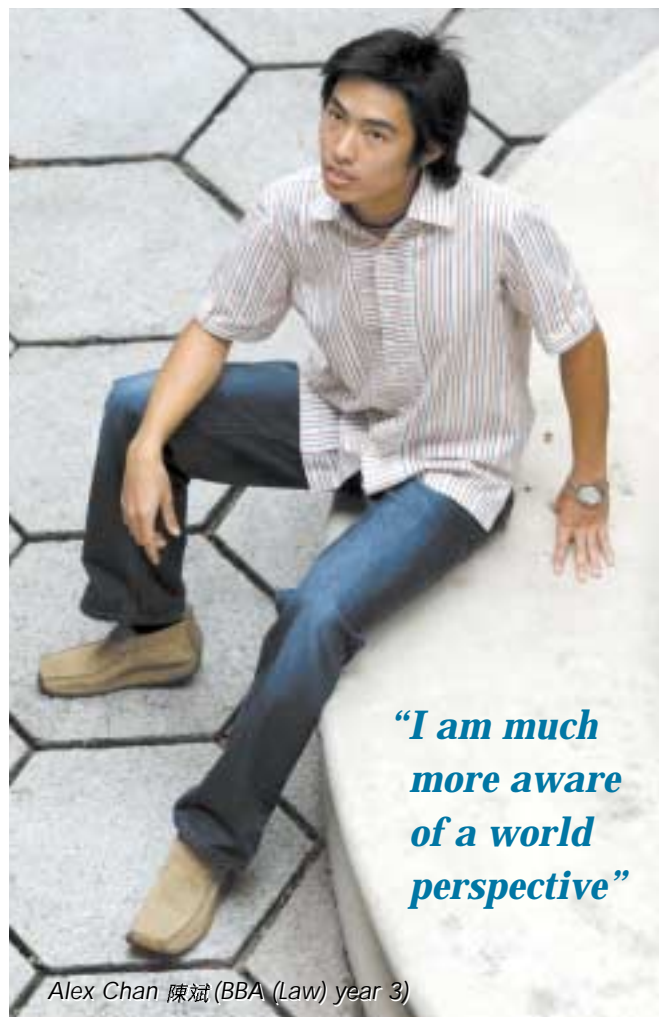
Both students were involved in the Worldwide Undergraduate Exchange Programme and its exciting and supportive network of Mentors which is able to provide students with access to a set of experiences for growth and development which are unequalled anywhere.

Alex Chan chose an exchange year in the United States. Wang Feifei, from Mainland China, chose Canada. Here we share some of their feelings and reflections on their experiences during their exchange years and of life at HKU.

In this issue we look at two of our current students reading for their HKU degrees. Each is very different in style and interests and focus, but they both have one thing in common – the desire to innovate, take risks and explore new horizons.

Whilst they may have gained top academic qualifications and awards they each have nevertheless engaged fully in the life of the community, and not focused solely on their academic studies.

The University has over the years, extended the range of experiences which can contribute to the development of its students. The Worldwide Undergraduate Exchange Programme is one example and the students described here demonstrate the unique contribution that such international exchanges can provide to the growth and richness of student understanding and indicate the nature of its impact on their lives.



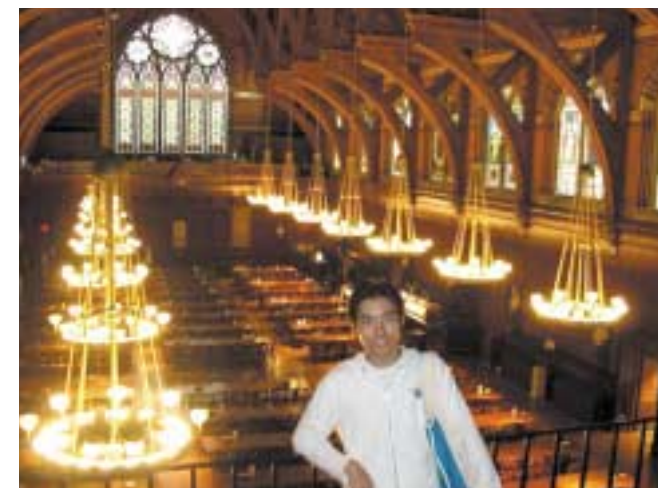
“I am much more aware of a world perspective”

Alex Chan 陳斌 (BBA (Law) year 3)

AN A CAPPELLA SINGER AND CHICAGO GANGSTER !

Alex Chan is in his third year at HKU studying for his Bachelor of Business Administration and Law, BBA(Law), having taken a year's exchange in the United States. He is one of our outstanding students, having won numerous awards (such as HKSAR Outstanding Student Award; Hong Kong 10 most Outstanding Youth; Citibank Young Innovator of Tomorrow) and, perhaps as important, having engaged in a number of worthwhile community activities such as gaining Gold Awards from both the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department and the Volunteer Movement; and being President of Hong Kong Outstanding Teens; and such innovative roles as, for example, having been Founder and President of the Love, Care and Dedication Society.

Whilst appointed as Young Envoy for UNICEF, Alex spent time in Sichuan Province looking at the ways in which UNICEF was applying funds, and getting first hand experience of local village life, farming and the rural education facilities under development.



about GPAs. Through my participation in Young Leaders I have the opportunity to influence others to think this way, not only thinking about academic studies”.

Alex took part in the Worldwide Exchange Programme and chose to spend a year at Tufts University in the United States, in the academic year 2002-03.

“Before I went on the exchange programme, I wanted to be either a lawyer or a business man, but my experience of working with the top academics in Economics made me see this as an important academic area in itself. I saw Boston as the cutting edge in Economics and the place was exciting and vibrant.”

Not only did Alex audit a wide range of courses in MIT, but he also successfully applied for a job in Harvard as research assistant to a professor working on a WHO project and supported this for his year. Alex described his experience in the United States as “eye opening”. *“There were many things I was unaware of culturally. In the US there are so many cultures, so many nationalities and maybe as many as 20 different countries are represented in one classroom – this was exciting!”*

Alex also pointed out that he had a greater opportunity to participate in arts and in sports (for which there were also credits to be gained) and at a greater level of participation. Alex also took part as a performer in a theatrical presentation in the Balch Arena Theatre in Boston (as a Chicago gangster!) and he also joined a popular a cappella singing group as a performer, and was praised in his solo performances. The group even produced a CD.

But he thought that the most different aspect of the academic environment at Tufts was to do with the range of the Liberal Arts courses available so that a very wide range of interests could be pursued. *“A major feature of my exchange was the diversity of courses in which I participated, such as taking Philosophy for the first time, and one of the most*



“At HKU I think that students are really aware of what is going on in the business and the political arena and perhaps our students are more mature in the way they present themselves, and how they fit in. They seem to have a real awareness of the significance of their own contributions to the community. What gives me the greatest satisfaction, I think, is the opportunity to influence others in lower years to be more “all rounded” – success is not all





Getting into the swing

important of these opportunities was being able to audit the PhD programme”.

“There is nothing like living in another country, being in a completely different environment – it was a total experience. But nothing was more important to me than being able to understand myself better, much better than before.

I believe, that following my exchange, I am more independent in both my academic and social life and I am much more aware of a World perspective. I know that HKU is eager to develop its international reputation on the World stage – not just in China and not just in Asia Pacific. That is why, for me, HKU is so exciting!”

Wang Feifei, from Mainland China, another outstanding student, arrived in Hong Kong in 1999 from Peking University, in Beijing where she planned to study Pure Maths. An opportunity arrived, however, which was to lead her to Hong Kong and beyond – an opportunity she took.

FROM BEIJING AND HKU TO CANADA

Wang Feifei is a Mainland student in her final year at HKU, completing a first degree in Actuarial Science. After studying Pure Maths at Peking University for one year Feifei came to HKU on a scholarship. Her expectations were “for a new culture, a more international and a more open learning environment”.

Whilst here at the University, Feifei also took advantage of the Worldwide Exchange Programme, and chose to go to Waterloo University in Canada. “I chose Waterloo mainly because I thought it had the best Actuarial Science programme, certainly the biggest.”

The experience gained in Hong Kong helped her overcome the challenge of being a ‘foreign’ student. “In Canada I needed to improve my English language skills”. Feifei saw that she needed to improve her opportunities for communication and so, bravely, she moved to a Hall where there were fewer Chinese students and also where meals were taken together. “At first it was hard to join in the conversations and I was uncertain about speaking English,



but I caught up by asking questions.” Talking with local people opened the door to their culture and she made many friends in Canada, and increased in confidence. Overcoming all language obstacles, she gained top place in two of her courses (“Loss Model” and “Casualty Insurance”) and came second in four of her other actuarial science courses, even achieving the Dean’s List at Waterloo for three terms. Feifei also made time in her busy academic and social schedule to be a research assistant during the last four months of her exchange.

But life was not all work! It included golfing and even skiing! One of the most important features of her stay in Canada was facilitated by her Mentor in Toronto, through the HKU Mentorship Programme (www.hku.hk/mentor). “He and his wife took care of me as a family, and despite his busy life



he found time to show me aspects of social and family life in Canada. He even introduced me to an Italian family to experience a real Western Christmas”.

“Being a HKU student is a wonderful experience, particularly being supported by our HKU ‘family’ even away from Hong Kong. I would say to students considering an exchange

programme to treasure the exchange period and work hard to catch the opportunities that come up. Opportunities are for the well prepared. Don’t hesitate to try new things. Don’t be afraid of failure, because failure is preparation for your next success. The University has built up my self confidence and I feel ready for the challenges in front of me”.

Before Feifei completed her exchange year she was hired by a Canadian consulting firm and will soon commence her career as an actuary.

by Nick Crawford



Feifei with her Mentor Augustine Chan 陳億崙 (BA 1982)

MAKING THE FAMILIAR STRANGE!

The single most outstanding characteristic in these profiles might be that each person identified roles in the University social network and in the wider community and understood that university life is not just about academic achievement. In this way they have enriched their own lives and the lives of others. Importantly, they helped themselves to achieve a better ‘all round’ balance as contributing, caring and intelligent members of the community.

Each student saw the opportunities and the challenges: Alex to study more widely across courses and to enjoy arts experiences, and Feifei to take the initiative to improve her access to language and to the open culture welcoming her in Canada.

The experiences gained in the Worldwide Exchange Programme and particularly with the support of Mentors provided some unforgettable lessons.

The quality of the institutions which partner HKU helped to set frameworks for learning which will colour the understanding and vision of the students who engage in them.

It has been said that travel to other places makes the strange seem familiar, and the familiar seem strange.

When students return to Hong Kong they do so not only with new social, cultural and academic experiences but with something more – much more – new perspectives and a clearer understanding of Hong Kong.



WHAT ARE THE FEELINGS OF MAINLAND STUDENTS WHEN THEY COME TO HONG KONG?

Feifei Wang found the move from Beijing to Hong Kong quite a change, and the move to Canada an even bigger change. Feifei described her need to improve opportunities for communication. But what of the other Mainland students who arrive in Hong Kong to join HKU? What are their feelings and their experiences when they come here to study? Here are some of their views.

XIAO Rui, Sherry 肖蕊 Year 1 from Shanghai

“As of now, I feel quite happy in HKU, because I have had a chance to have so many different experiences and to study in a different way. The only problem is Cantonese – I wish I had learned it before.”

HE Fang, Frank 何方 Year 1 from Zhejiang Province

“I have experienced a more relaxing but also a more challenging atmosphere for both studying and living. HKU has greatly inspired me, in many ways...”

YUAN Yuan 袁媛 Year 1 from Shanghai

“I think studying in HKU is the right choice, although I have already met some difficulties and will meet more in the future. I think this will be a really good experience from which I can learn a lot.”



HE Fang, Frank 何方



SONG Yichun 宋以淳



XIAO Rui, Sherry 肖蕊

SONG Yichun 宋以淳 Year 1 from Shanghai

“Through the whole of last year, I had been looking forward to coming to this vigorous city, to enjoy university life and also to be a member of the HKU family.

Time flows away so quickly that I have already been here for 2 months!

Though my hometown – Shanghai – is also a prosperous metropolis just as is Hong Kong, everything, no matter whether inside or outside the campus, is so fresh and full of challenges to me.

Foremost, of course, is the unique orientation in HKU. Before I came here, I had already been told by some older students that the orientation in HKU is really ‘harsh’. But I decided to experience it myself out of curiosity. At first, I was really astonished at the games they played (because we have hardly played those games since our senior school) but as time passed by, I came to understand the meaning and the essentials that the games tried to communicate. We began to get to know each other through enjoying the mass games. We faced the problems together just as in the words of one of the cheers: ‘You and I will never fall for we belong to HKU’. I felt the strength and warmth in the team just through those simple games. Until now, I still remember those times when I got wet through in the water games, when I joined the vibrant cheers around the camp fire, when I yelled with all the others at the competition of beer drinking. I believe it will always be an unforgettable experience in my life.

Of course, as we are experiencing the new environment, we are also learning to adapt to a completely new life style here. As for me, I used to sleep at least 10 hours a day, but now at most 5 hours – a lifestyle that works hard and plays hard as well.

Also I try to communicate with the local students in my poor Cantonese in my daily life here. What’s more, we have to make our decisions totally by ourselves, which is quite difficult for children like us who had never left their parents before.

Here, I really would like to show my appreciation for those people who helped us a lot: the teachers from the University’s China Affairs Office, those elder students and also many warm-hearted local students.

Up till now, I believe it is the right choice for me to choose HKU instead of the other one in Shanghai. I am, as a freshman, exploring and growing happily in the brand-new university life!”

Since the beginning of the Sports Scholarship Scheme in 1995, the University has admitted a total of 67 sports scholars. 19 students have been admitted to HKU as sports scholars this year. This represents the highest number of sports scholars to be accepted by the University in a single year. They are:

- Cheng Kwok-yeung 鄭國揚 (BSc(CSIS), wushu)
- Cheung Yi-nei 張依妮 (BSc(SSLM), fencing)
- Choi Mei-yui, Rebecca 蔡湄蕊 (BA, swimming)
- Chow Chi-wai 周志偉 (BEng(ME), volleyball)
- Fong Wing-ting 方穎婷 (BSocSc, kendo)
- Hui Chi-hang 許志恆 (BBA, basketball)
- Kwok Sau-foon 郭秀歡 (BA, badminton)
- Kwong Ngai-shing, Jacky 鄺毅成 (BSc(SSLM), volleyball)
- Lau Tsang 劉錚 (BBA, table tennis)
- Lau Ying-kai 柳應佳 (BEng(BSE), badminton)

- Lau Yuk-lun, Alan 劉玉麟 (BBA(Acc&Fin), volleyball)
- Lo Kai-ho, Keith 勞啟豪 (BSc(SSLM), tennis)
- Ng Tsz-kin 吳子堅 (BEng(MedE), handball)
- Sin Ka-man 單嘉玟 (BSc(ERS), swimming)
- So Hoi-nam 蘇凱男 (BSc(SSLM), athletics)
- Tse Yuk 謝旭 (BBA(IS), basketball)
- Wong Kam-kau 黃金球 (BSc(SSLM), fencing)
- Yeung Tsz-kwong 楊子光 (BEcon, basketball)
- Yu Sum-ye, Samuel 余心怡 (BSocSc, artistic cycling)

Sports Scholars

