

Email from [REDACTED] of 23 August 2011

Subject: Request for HKU Council's Investigation into 8.18 Incident

Dear Mr. Huang,

As an alumnus of the University of Hong Kong, I am writing to express my discontent and anger to the mistakes made by the University on organizing the Centenary Ceremony held on 18th August 2011. I hereby urge the University Council to investigate the incident in a serious manner.

On 18th August 2011, the Centenary Ceremony was held at the Loke Yew Hall. While hundreds of guests have the privilege to enjoy the delightful atmosphere indoor, many students, alumni, staff members and visitors were denied access not only to the Loke Yew Hall but to the University campus. Moreover, some students who wanted to express their views to the Ceremony guests were trapped, detained, and attacked by the policemen and University guards on campus. I was shocked to know that such a brutal suppression could have happened at the University of Hong Kong, which has a long acclaimed reputation for its respect for freedom and openness.

Several days after the incident, there are still a lot of confusion among the public regarding the details of the incident. I would like to request the Council, as the governing body of the University with the power vested by the Statutes, to probe into the incident, in a hope that the following questions can be appropriately addressed and answered:

1. When did the University (including the Vice-Chancellor, Centenary Celebrations Implementation Group, Centenary Celebrations Secretariat and the Faculty Co-ordinators) decide to organize a Centenary Ceremony on 18th August 2011?
2. The HKSAR government announced Vice Premier Li Ke-qiang's visit on 9th August 2011. Did Vice Premier Li tell the University that he would like to pay a visit, or did the University invite him proactively? If it was the latter case, when exactly did the University invite Vice Premier Li to the Centenary Ceremony?
3. How many guests (academics, alumni, supporters and friends of the University) did the University initially invite (i.e. sending invitation letters)? By what criteria did the University decide whom to invite or not?
4. The University invited Vice Premier Li and Lord David Clive Wilson of Tillyorn as the honorary guests of the Centenary Ceremony. However, Vice Premier Li was invited to sit on the Chancellor's chair, placed in the middle of the stage, while Lord Wilson was not given nearly the same respect in the seating arrangement. Although the University had explained that the chair was not solely for the Chancellor in a non-academic setting, it is apparent that the University has treated the two honorary guests very differently. Did the University have such an arrangement deliberately out of any consideration? Or was it a protocol mistake?
5. When was the University in talks with the HKSAR's Security Bureau and the Hong Kong Police regarding the security arrangement of the Centenary Ceremony?

Which party initiated the discussion? Did the University seek help from the Hong Kong Police, or did the Hong Kong Police offer guard force to the University proactively? Did the University agree to leave the full security control of the University campus to the Hong Kong Police? Was the University informed by the Hong Kong Police about its security measures (e.g. number of policemen deployed, locations, details of security check, measures against protesters, etc) prior to the Ceremony? What did the University do immediately when it found that some students and alumni were denied access to the campus area, while some others were brutally attacked by the policemen and the University security guards, just because they wanted to protest peacefully? What will the University do to follow up with the Hong Kong Police regarding its abuse of power on its campus?

6. The Vice Chancellor Professor Tsui had expressed his regret and apology to the student who was hit and detained by the policemen and the University guards. However, the University has failed to explain its role in imposing excessive security measures and organising a politicised event in favour of the state leader. What is the response from the University?

7. The University of Hong Kong has been long acclaimed for its openness and respect for freedom. However, students and alumni's freedom of speech and protest was violently suppressed on 18th August 2011. Even access to the campus was restrained. Will the University apologise for the blunders it had caused?

8. After the Centenary Ceremony incident, what measures will the University take in order to defend itself as an international university which always embraces openness, diversity and freedom?

“Sapientia et Virtus” is the motto of the University of Hong Kong. The incident is an alarm to all of us whether we can uphold the value of wisdom and virtue, regardless of external pressure or suppression. I sincerely request the Council to look into the incident and give us more ideas on why, what and how we should celebrate the Centenary of our beloved alma mater.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Email from [REDACTED] of 18 September 2011

Subject: suggestions

Dear Review Panel:

At the California Institute of Technology, the invitation of a speaker for the annual commencement ceremony is open to a vote by all students (undergrads and graduates) of the campus. It is an open system and there is no controversy as who the university will invite. Hong Kong University should have a similarly open system. A university

should not only invite speakers who are on the side of the government. At Columbia University, the President of the university, Prof. Bollinger vetoed the opposition forces to invite the President of the Iranian government who was attending the United Nations General Assembly to give a speech on the Columbia campus. Iran was the enemy of the US Government and condemned by the Western world. Does our President have this moral courage to do the same? I wonder.

Email from [REDACTED] of 18 September 2011

Subject: 轉寄： 可循正式途徑投訴警方在港大校園內虐待港大學生及香港的大學生過份使用暴力打壓民意

----- 轉寄的郵件 -----

從： [REDACTED]

收件人： [REDACTED]

傳送日期： 2011 年 09 月 14 日 (週三) 2:30 AM

主題： 可循正式途徑投訴警方在港大校園內虐待港大學生及香港的大學生過份使用暴力打壓民意

可循正式途徑投訴警方 818 在港大校園內虐待港大學生及香港的大學生...過份使用暴力打壓民意,...

港府應供免費法援向有關警方查究問責及懲處

[REDACTED]

Email from [REDACTED] of 26 September 2011

Subject: comments on issues arising from centenary ceremony

to the review panel,

i don't know if comments from overseas re the above are welcome. i am a 1961 alumnus now enjoying retirement after working for nearly 30 years in vancouver, b.c., canada. since my right hand became incapacitated two years ago, i have been typing with my left hand only. to make typing easier and faster, i skip all the upper cases and limit use of punctuation marks to just commas and periods. if my comments are to be made public, i shall appreciate your panel doing a little editing.

as we all know, china to-day is a communist country only in name. in the course of a few decades after the cultural revolution, it has transformed itself into a political and economic superpower to be reckoned with on the world stage. the mass population for the first time can live above the subsistence level, and the country as a whole enjoys a period of stability as well as prosperity since the reigns of kang-hsi, yung-cheng, chien-lung in the ching dynasty when china was the richest nation in the world. this unprecedented feat of achievement is widely admired by the developing nations, and has won high praises from the western powers. however, i won't hesitate to be among the first ones to say that china is far from perfect, as it is still beset with zillion problems on all sides.

china is commonly faulted for still retaining a one party system, albeit an enlightened and benevolent oligarchy, without a mandate from the people. i do not want to digress here to discuss the pros and cons of an enlightened one party system vs the generally accepted mode of western democracy which has proved to be very successful in small european nations with a nationwide base of educated citizenry who can think independently. on the other hand, singapore and japan also provide good examples of enlightened one-party system where the ruling party overrides the feeble and minimal political opposition and brings immense economic success to the country. in the case of japan, the liberal democratic party established under the aegis of american occupation in the post ww2 years virtually dominated the diet with nominal or little opposition from the opposing party or parties until they lost to the right wing democratic party of japan by a narrow margin two years ago. grooming future leaders through an arduous process of selection and elimination from party cadres, as china has been doing, can be more effective than going through general election every few years which is no guarantee of getting a leader with the expertise and experience to run a government.

vice-premier li qeqiang from the 5th generation of ccp elite is slated to be the designated successor to premier wen jiabo, the same as vice-president xi jinping is meant to succeed president hu jintao. they are expected to be as good as the current incumbents, if not better, when their time comes. needless to say when the world to-day is threatened by undercurrents of terrorism, and in view of the fact that hong kong citizens fall prey easily to incitements by provocateurs to take to the streets, imposition of tight public security control was necessary to protect li's safety. it is understandable that the police chief mr. w. h. tsang is prepared to face a barrage of criticisms for putting excessive security in place rather than having the slightest harm come to li. the vice premier has a good track record of representing china in missions abroad. he

himself is no gadhafi or mubarek. so the protest of hku students was not against him personally. he was invited to attend the ceremony as a guest of honour, and this joyful event came on the heels the exhilarating news that hku was rated no. 22 in the survey of the top 100 universities in the world. in my mind, the ceremony definitely was not the suitable occasion to stage any protest. if the students had any grievance to air, they should at least hear what the vice-premier had to say first. admittedly posting armed policemen in uniform inside the confines of the university to keep order was a gross mistake. it was therefore regrettable that while the police was engaged in physical scuffle with the protesting students, the vice-premier inside loke yew hall was announcing the plan to invite 1000 faculty members and students to do research in china as a centenary gift. it goes without saying the protest put a damper on li's good intentions.

i gather the message the students want to convey is that the hku student body with a tradition of freedom of speech is protesting that this right is still denied to the chinese people at large to-day. with due respect i daresay hku never had a tradition of freedom of speech until the last colonial governor chris patten assumed office when he encouraged the people of hk to be articulate about their right of self determination regarding their future and to be protective about their human rights. this was an usual ploy used by the british who had years of experience in colonization to create a hornet's nest for the incoming government when they evacuated the colony for good. before and after my years in the university, students were mainly concerned with self advancement and showed no interest whatsoever in politics or social issues. if they dared speak out against the government or the university or any authority, they could say goodbye to a career in government service or any reputable non-chinese business enterprises. i recall that between 1959-1961 (the exact year escapes my memory), the residents of morrison hall staged a sit-in outside the hall to protest just against the quality of hostel food. the political branch of hk police sent plain clothes to take photos of the students taking part in the sit-in and treated them like criminal suspects. the whole student body remained quiet and did not raise a sound against the whole incident. the incumbent home affairs secretary the hon. tsang tak-shing when as a hot-blooded matriculation student was arrested for distributing literature condemning the drastic measures used in curbing the 1967 riots and jailed for two years, the hku student body, supposedly the champion of freedom of speech, did not stand up to plead for leniency. granted the penalty was meted out under 'martial law' as deterrent to copycats, the jail term was certainly too severe for a first time youth offender whose offense was just condemning police brutality, not sedition. chan yuk-cheung, a hku student who drowned in the high seas, albeit accidentally, during the diaoyutai movement was unable to rally enthusiastic support from the student body to respond to his call. university students were simply afraid to show interest in politics, and invariably preferred to be fence sitters to follow where the wind blows. however during tung chee wah's term of office after hong kong reverted back to china, a scandal broke out about pressure exerted by the ceo's office with the connivance of the then vice-chancellor to suppress hku's public opinion poll on the rating of tung's performance in office, it sparked the joint effort by the university community and the public against the government to protect academic freedom. eventually the government was found to be in the wrong by an independent commission. in the old days, such scandal would be put under wraps or swept under the carpet and would never leak out. so something good did come out of hong kong after it was reverted back to china.

mr. lee shing-hong and his friends apparently belong to the post-90 generation and have received the baptism of western democracy. how i wish i could speak so freely on campus like that in my time. they have the good fortune of not experiencing or knowing the extent of heart-wrenching sufferings the chinese people had gone through in the last century culminating in the cultural revolution which turned the country upside down to uproot the old values and plunged the entire country into abject poverty. if they do, they will cherish and appreciate what the present regime had accomplished in the past half century to rebuild china from the ground up. the purpose of vice-premier li's visit was to officiate at the opening of the new government administration headquarters and to attend the centenary ceremony of hku, both auspicious events. it was not a goodwill visit nor a fact finding trip. arranging him to drop in to see a tenement flat in a public housing estate served no useful purpose except as a customary public relations stint. if the arrangement could be switched to a public address at loke yew hall to the student body, followed by entertaining questions from the floor instead of having the vice-premier delivering just a congratulatory message at the ceremony, it would serve as a significant highlight of the celebration as well as providing the students the chance to observe the vice-premier as a future leader at close quarters. presidents clinton and obama had delivered public addresses at beita in their state visits to china and had conducted question and answer sessions to resounding success. premier wen jiabo had done the same either at oxford or cambridge. why couldn't this be done this time with the vice-premier in hong kong? it is a pity that those organizing the celebration had missed this godsend opportunity. but alas, it is not too late. mr. lee and others can still avail themselves of the vice-premier's open invitation of 'political infiltration' to go to china to do research or study. go with an open mind for at least 6 months to 1 year, explore the complexities of this sprawling country and the inherent problems it has to tackle. attend the frequent talks, discussions, debates on current issues open to the public on radio, tv as well as in town halls and academic institutes, you will be amazed how free and uninhibited the participants can voice their opinions. the audience, mainly common people from all walks of life but including oftentimes invited government officials, specialists in different fields of work, foreign correspondents, residents and students speaking fluent putunghua, can criticize or even satirize various government policies and measures without restraint.

in conclusion, a piece of unsolicited advice to the juniors in my alma mater. try to love china in spite of all its imperfections. above all, try to do your part to mold china into a china you want it to be. good luck.

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Email from ██████████ of 27 October 2011

Subject: letter to the Review Panel

Dear members of the Review Panel,

As long-serving members of the university, we have been following the news of the 8.18 event, and would like to offer our personal views on this matter to the Review Panel.

First of all, it is very appropriate for the University to invite the Vice Premier of China, Le Keqiang, to attend its centenary celebration. A university that aims to be a world-class university championing for excellence and diversity should feel confident enough in hosting visits by leaders of countries of different political systems and religious beliefs. More importantly, as Hong Kong is part of China, it is simply a great honor to have our state leaders attend the centenary celebration.

Second, we find the arrangements for the centenary celebration, including the seating arrangement for Li Keqiang and the number of Hong Kong police deployed on HKU campus, highly appropriate. Had the British prime minister attended an HKU event, say, before 1997, would we have asked him or her to sit in a seat other than the center seat? Meanwhile, as the University does not have the professional knowledge in providing security service to state leaders, it is quite natural to ask the Hong Kong Police for help and trust their professional judgment including the number of police deployed on campus and the size of the security zone surrounding the main venue for the celebration. How could the University explain its discretion in having a smaller number of police deployed on campus had there been an unfortunate event happening to Li Keqiang?

Third, the Vice Chancellor has handled the aftermath of the 8.18 event with civility and humility. The triggers for the 8.18 event are some deep-rooted social problems in Hong Kong, such as its struggle for democracy, income inequality, housing prices, and monopoly of businesses. It is simply unfair for the university, and specifically, the Vice Chancellor, to bear the immense social forces which are entirely beyond the control of the University. We should thank the Vice-Chancellor for his handling of the event, and make this message clear to the community by reappointing him for another term.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Email from [REDACTED] of 2 November 2011

Subject: Centenary ceremony on Aug 18

Dear Panel members,

As a BA graduate of HKU in [REDACTED] and an MA graduate in [REDACTED], I was very shocked to hear and watch the news about the whole incident on August 18, 2011. I was not in HK on that day, but the news came back very often on the following days. I appreciated the prompt reaction of Professor Tusi Lap-chee and was touched by his humble and sincere attitude. I am also glad to see that HKU is not going to brush the whole case under the carpet. I wish the university will take this incident as a valuable lesson in planning for any event in the future.

In hindsight, I have the following suggestions or questions:

1. HKU is an academic institutue. We don't want it turns into an ivory tower, and yet there is no need to make connections with any political bodies or leaders. It brings in more problems and damages to the university.
2. Why can't students protest in front of Luk Yew Hall? Afterall, HKU students are the hosts in this centenary event. Hong Kong is known for her openness in holding demonstrations and protests. Why can't we show the world how the university educates her students into responsible citizens?
3. Why did security guards and police have so much power? Who dedicated the power to them? The council? Or the organizing committee of the centenary event? Do you think all these parties had abused their power in preventing the freedom of movement of HKU students in the campus?

Best regards,

[REDACTED]

Email from [REDACTED] of 6 November 2011

Dear members of the 818 review committee:

From the communication we received on November 2, I understand that the Committee has held six meetings and has made significant progress in its investigation.

Based on the information provided by CPAO and from the press coverage, it seems that the roles of Development and Alumni Affairs Office and the China Affairs Office have not been emphasized. Since these two offices played major roles in the organization of the 818 ceremony, I believe the personnel in these two offices hold the key to this investigation.

There is a common perception among our colleagues that the Committee will whitewash the whole affair. Knowing the membership of the Committee, I know that it will not happen. I hope that the final report will clearly indicate persons responsible for the mistakes in the handling of the affair, from the design to the execution stage. This will go a long way to restore the public trust in the University and lay the groundwork for us to move forward.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]

Email from [REDACTED] of 2 December 2011

Subject:

To: Review Panel on Centenary Ceremony held on August 18, 2011

I was one of the professors sitting on stage in that Ceremony. I am sure my views are similar to many other colleagues in the University:

(1) I find the massive scale of the security by the Hong Kong Police in that morning, or even the night before, completely unnecessary. As I was coming to the campus from the western district, groups of policemen every other 10 meters or so were guarding the entire Pokfulam Road from the Western Magistracy, all the way up to the gas station at Pokfield road. The result was a long traffic queue during the rush hours in that morning, which was a big inconvenience not just to members of the University but also to the residents nearby (e.g. in Belcher's Garden). Yet, I was not able to see any demonstrators along the way. So what was the Police guarding for? Surely, the University could not have invited the Police to guard these places, simply because it has no power to do so (these places are outside the campus by far). During my 20+ years at this University and 40+ years as a Hong Kong resident, I have never seen such a scale of security blockading the campus.

(2) I find the seating plan both on stage and the floor a bit unusual, but to me this is not unacceptable. "Unusual" because I have not seen such a setting before, and others think this violated HKU's tradition, but "not unacceptable" because the whole centenary celebration itself is also new to HKU which means there is simply no tradition to follow. It must be a personal liking, depending on one's social-political view or even agenda, to say whether it is proper to have the Vice Premier sitting in the middle of the stage in a high chair, or to have a group of rich and influential sitting at the front on the floor – to me, there cannot be an absolute "right" or "wrong" on this issue because someone has to decide on something, and for any arrangement some will like it while others don't. The "rich and influential" present on that day are indeed long-term supporters of the University, although a general feeling of the community may be that they are the source for the widened poverty gap in Hong Kong. But if one says that HKU only treasures relationship with this group, then one has forgotten the many other efforts HKU has been making to serve or to mingle with the less privileged in the community. As one example out of many where HKU treasures relationship with the "grass-root", not long ago HKU honored a long-serving supportive staff in University Hall, in the most prestigious way by making her an Honorary University Fellow. To me, the whole debate about the seating plan is nothing more than a little whirl in the teacup – the discussion was useful for everyone to express their sentiments, and future organizers can bear these in mind, but I hope that the University will not be setting "regulations" or "guidelines" on how we receive VVIP in the future, based on the comments heard. If we do that, we would have to set regulations on every minor thing.

(3) The university must continue to engage in Mainland China, and must continue to receive VVIP from there and the rest of the world. There can be no mistake for the University to invite the Vice Premier as a VVIP – unless someone has a strong political agenda.

To conclude, the biggest problem with me on August 18 was the much escalated security by the Hong Kong Police. The result has shown that this was damaging to the University's image as a place of freedom and wisdom. I wish the Review Panel can identify the role of the University on fixing up such an unnecessary scale of security, which I suspect is zero, since very similar arrangements were also seen in other activities of the Vice Premier elsewhere in Hong Kong. I have no big concern with the

setting inside the Lok Yew Hall – to me that was one mode that was decided and it is just a matter of personal liking whether other modes are better. However, it is quite a misfortune that when one pieces the watertight security outside together with the setting inside Lok Yew Hall, one sees an overall picture of “a closed door ceremony for the rich and influential”. I must say that as a person sitting inside the Hall, I did not feel in the slightest way that the ceremony was for pleasing the rich and influential – it was plainly a ceremony to celebrate the University’s centenary. I was glad to see two VVIPs and listen to their speeches, colleagues and students, and some familiar faces which I normally see on TV or magazines. The only problem was the security outside which really made people nervous.

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Email from ██████████ of 13 December 2011

1. When a visitor is not welcome by students, then this visitor should not pay visit to these students. Nevertheless, this visitor might be welcome by some other portions of students. Therefore, students should be 'categorised'. Those students who do not welcome the visitor need not turn up, or appear somewhere else. The reason why they protest should be made known in a prominent place so that both the public and the visitor has a chance to see it. The visitor should not IMPOSE on the students who do not want to see this visitor. There are many other ways to visit HKU. The organiser should be aware of the impact in the situation.
2. The police should respect the spirit of the Bill of Rights.
3. If anything is done against the laws of Hong Kong. then the police should come in.
4. On this occasion, the organisers of the event should be blamed.

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Email from ██████████ of 4 January 2012

Subject: Comments on Visit of Chinese Vice Premier to HKU campus

Dear Sirs,

as an alumnus, may I make some quick comments for future security arrangements for dignitaries to the campus of HKU please:

1. Rather than going to the maximum possibilities of security arrangements, please stay with the minimum arrangements to ensure security. The scale should be consistent with those for dignitaries for which there were precedents during the colonial times. Perception is reality: if the University is perceived to be departing from previous precedents, the University is asking for trouble. Should the seat of the Vice Chancellor be

surrendered for the convenience or honor of the Vice Premier? Or should the Vice Chancellor always hold his place in the University, and therefore his seat, even when the Vice Premier made a visit and made a speech on the occasion? Who was the host and who was the guest? These were very symbolic events and as far as I am concerned, it was very unfortunate that the Vice Premier took over the seat of the Vice Chancellor during the ceremony.

2. All stakeholders should participate and buy in the final security arrangements. In the arrangements for the visit of the Chinese Vice Premier, we have seen the Police Commissioner contradicting the statements of the Vice Chancellor, which is most unfortunate.

3. Demonstrations are a fact of life in Hong Kong, which is well known to the leaders of China. There is no need to present a different picture by hiding these as the Chinese leaders know better. This is Hong Kong and this is HKU: let us be honest about ourselves and let us strive to preserve the core values of Hong Kong and our campus.

Wishing the University all the best!


