Current Development of Co-curricular Activities in Higher Education in Hong Kong

Dr. Grace Au has assumed the role as the Director of Student Affairs of The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) since 1 Nov 2007. Formerly the Director of Center for Enhanced Learning and Teaching (CELT) of HKUST, Dr. Au has served the University for 14 years between 1992 and 2006. She received her PhD and MS degrees from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1990 and 1987 respectively, and started off her academic career as an Assistant Professor of Information and Systems Management at HKUST in 1992. She subsequently converted to an administrative position and became the Associate Director of the Office of Public Affairs in 1997. In 1999, Dr. Au took up the Directorship of CELT, a capacity she held until her departure in 2006.

Dr. Au is well experienced in both the academic and administrative operations of the University. In her capacity as the Director of CELT, she was substantially involved in designing and developing multimedia systems for instructional and e-learning applications. Dr. Au’s academic career has involved her in direct interactions with students, and amply exposed her to understanding and handling students’ needs and expectations. Dr. Au’s unique mix of teaching and administrative accomplishments enables her to take on a coordinated and proactive role for the Student Affairs Office in the overall student life development. She is actively pursuing new initiatives that help to enhance the total educational experience for HKUST students.

In preparation for 334, the Student Affairs Office of HKUST launched two new co-curricular programmes in Fall 2009 – Living Learning Communities (LLC) and HKUST Connect to help students acquire out-of-class learning experiences with intended learning outcomes mapped to the University’s Graduate Attributes, ABC-LIVE.

The piloting of the LLC Programme was launched in one of the new undergraduate halls with the intention to create and extend students’ learning opportunities outside the classroom to integrate curricular and co-curricular experiences. A total of eight theme-based communities was established with 356 student participants in the Programme. In addition to two common intended learning outcomes that were set for all students participating in the LLC Program, each LLC has its own sets of intended learning outcomes based on its theme and goals mapped to ABC-LIVE. It is worth noting that whilst learning communities are a powerful pedagogy, the overall experience is not the same for every student and it remains an enduring challenge for the program team to make continuous efforts in engaging students who may have different goals, attitudes, skills and reasons for entering the communities.

HKUST Connect is a community engagement initiative that aims to build on the University’s efforts in raising civic awareness and developing sustainable partnerships with the wider community to deepen student learning and promote a benevolent world. Since its formation in December 2009, the Programmes has recruited over 600 students, offered 14 service projects of varying degrees of student engagement and involved 74 student leaders and over 260 participants. In addition to the set up of a Service Learning Development Grant to assist faculty members in designing new service learning courses or adding a service learning component to an existing course, a new Student Civic Fellowship programme was launched to provide stipends for outstanding students who wish to acquire real work experience with NGOs or corporations with needs to realize their corporate social responsibilities. A Service Learning Project course, designed to enhance students’ civic engagement through structured service activities related to one or more community organizations, was also offered as a general education elective course since Spring 2010. It is envisioned that coupled with the co-curricular efforts of academic departments, the platform will enable students of varied interests and abilities to acquire hands-on experiences that serve communities, and together, exemplify the University’s tradition of creative problem-solving and entrepreneurial spirit in meeting community needs.