CULTIVATING A FORCE FOR GOOD

THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ALUMNI ENDOWMENT FUND

By Eric Collins

(From left) Mr Wilson Wong, Professor Andrew Fan, Mr Jackson Chan and Ms Agnes Tsoi celebrate the launch of the CB Alumni Endowment Fund.

The establishment of the new CityUHK College of Business Alumni Endowment Fund represents an historic milestone for the College—a shift from traditional, transactional philanthropy toward a sustainable, multi-generational partnership. To understand the depth of the initiative we set up an interview with four key voices: **Professor Andrew Fan** and **Mr Jackson Chan**, both pivotal figures in the fund's creation representing the CAAB Fundraising Subcommittee, and **Mr Wilson Wong** and **Ms Agnes Tsoi Yue-ying**, representing the generations of students whose lives have been altered by such support.

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The College of Business (CB) has a long history of supporting individual student scholarships, but the CB Alumni Endowment Fund is a new departure, built with a view to achieving sustainable, recurring value. The fund is more than a financial reservoir; it is a structural transformation designed to ensure that the brightest minds in business are never limited by their circumstances. For decades, scholarships have been the primary vehicle for alumni giving. While valuable, they are often transient. Professor Andrew Fan, a long-term donor and a highly accomplished business leader with many years of proven success–a role he continues to excel in today–who has maintained his own scholarship scheme at CityUHK for 19 years, recognised the need for a more enduring model.

"I like the idea of an endowment fund very much because it's perpetual, unlike in the past," Professor Fan says. He notes that the fundamental challenge of university fundraising is the exhaustion of personal networks. Once you have reached out to your immediate circle, finding new sources of funding becomes difficult. The endowment model solves this by creating a perpetual engine: "The key to an endowment fund is that it is not only sustainable but also compassionate".

Jackson Chan, Co-founder and Executive Director of KOS International–a listed recruitment company–whose daily work involves monitoring talent markets across Hong Kong, the Greater Bay Area, and Southeast Asia, echoes this sentiment. He views the endowment as a necessary evolution in how alumni repay their successes. "The idea really grew out of a shared realisation among the alumni that we needed something more permanent," Chan says. "We wanted to create a structured, sustainable vehicle that ensures capable College of Business students are never held back by a lack of financial resources. It was sparked by a desire to turn our individual gratitude into a collective legacy".

By preserving the principal and investing it, the fund ensures that returns are used to support students year after year, decade after decade. This provides the College of Business administration with a reliable safety net and springboard that remains intact regardless of market downturns or economic cycles.

Levelling the Playing Field

One of the most profound drivers behind the fund is the recognition of inequality in access to opportunity. Jackson points out that while drive and talent are universal, the resources to capitalise on them are not.

"Often, what separates a good student from a truly exceptional business leader is simply a well-timed opportunity". This might mean having the financial breathing room to focus on studies rather than working multiple part-time jobs, or the ability to accept an unpaid internship at a high-growth startup.

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For the student beneficiaries, such support can be the catalyst for their first major professional breakthrough. Agnes Tsoi Yue-ying, a current BBA Finance student, recently utilised scholarship funds to represent CityUHK at an international case competition in Seattle. "Without this fund, the additional experience in LA might have been out of reach," she says, reflecting on a trip that allowed her to immerse herself in U.S. culture and connect with international peers.

Similarly, Wilson Wong, Marketing Director of Price.com.hk, recalls receiving a scholarship 19 years ago as a final-year student. For him, the impact was psychological as much as financial. "It gave me a certain sense of achievement, and it really helped me to uplift my sense of belonging to CityUHK," Wong says. As a fresh graduate entering the commercial world, the recognition served as a powerful credential: "You will set a higher expectation for yourself and try to work harder. You can achieve a kind of self-actualisation".

Nurturing the Agile Leader

The founders of the fund are clear that they are not just looking for academic excellence. In an era of AI and shifting regional dynamics, they are investing in specific human qualities.

"Pure academic excellence is no longer enough," Jackson says. "I am hoping to nurture agility, cross-cultural empathy, and resilience". He believes the fund buys students time and mental space to take calculated risks, such as traveling for global exchanges or joining intense case competitions. The goal is to produce leaders who possess the "emotional intelligence to lead diverse teams, the courage to navigate ambiguity, and the integrity to do business the right way".

Agnes Tsoi agrees that the financial relief provided by the fund is essential for leadership development. "How a student could accumulate leadership experience is through participating in student club, case competition, or say volunteer work," she says. The fund allows students to "free up their time and relieve their financial burden" so they can engage in these vital extracurricular roles.

A Force for Good

The theme of this magazine, "The Return on Kindness," sparked a discussion on the role of empathy in business. Professor Fan prefers the term "Building a force for good". He believes that by uniting people with a good heart and a shared mission, the fund strengthens the entire institution.

Jackson Chan takes this further, arguing that kindness is a pragmatic business strategy. "Kindness in the corporate world is often misunderstood as a weakness. In reality, kindness is the foundation of trust, and trust is the highest currency in leadership". He sees top talent frequently leaving toxic cultures despite high pay, whereas people will "run through walls for a leader who genuinely cares about their well-being".

For Chan, leadership kindness involves creating "psychological safety"–the freedom for a team to innovate, dissent, and make mistakes without fear. It is also about "actively mentoring your subordinates so they can eventually outgrow you".

This philosophy of mentorship is already visible in the alumni community. Wilson Wong, now a team head for marketing and e-commerce teams, frequently returns to the campus as a part-time teacher. "I'm trying to come back to my school to teach to junior students... trying to use peer influence to influence them and motivate them to be good student leaders," Wong says.

The Vision for the Next Twenty Years

When asked what success looks like for the Endowment Fund two decades from now, the participants moved past financial metrics toward cultural ones.

Professor Fan measures success by the number of scholarship recipients who eventually "pay back" into the fund as sponsors themselves. "The measurement of success should not be about how rich... it's more about the spiritual thing," he says. "How far they believe in this endowment fund and in this action".

Jackson Chan envisions an "unbroken chain where today's beneficiaries organically become tomorrow's benefactors". He hopes for a shift from competitive advantage to collaborative advantage, where students view their peers not as rivals on a grading curve, but as future co-founders, future clients, or future business partners. He also wants to see a deeper sense of civic duty: "I want CB graduates to measure their career success not just by their job titles or stock options, but by the tangible, positive impact they leave on their communities".

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Together We Make Things Happen

The message to the wider alumni community is one of immediate engagement. Jackson Chan emphasises that giving back is a habit, not a retirement plan. "You do not need to wait until you have 'made it' to start giving back," he urges. Whether it is a financial contribution, offering an internship, or spending an hour reviewing a resume, every act matters. "A rising tide lifts all boats. When our alumni network unites to elevate the next generation, we elevate the reputation of CityUHK and the entire Hong Kong business community".

The student perspective, voiced by Agnes Tsoi, provides a final, poignant validation for the fund's supporters. "I just wanted to say a big thank you to alumni because they truly show that success isn't just about doing well for yourself, but also about helping the next person," she says. "As a student, we will definitely try our best and work hard to prove that it's worth it".

Wilson Wong encapsulates the spirit of the initiative in a simple parting thought: " Together we make things happen".

Professor Fan, recipient of the first CityUHK Distinguished Alumni Award and an Honorary Fellow back in 2009, concludes, referencing a slogan he developed decades ago: "CityUers: achieving great success 城大人，成大器 ". Through the CB Alumni Endowment Fund, that winning streak is no longer left to chance; it is being engineered as a permanent legacy for the future of Hong Kong business.