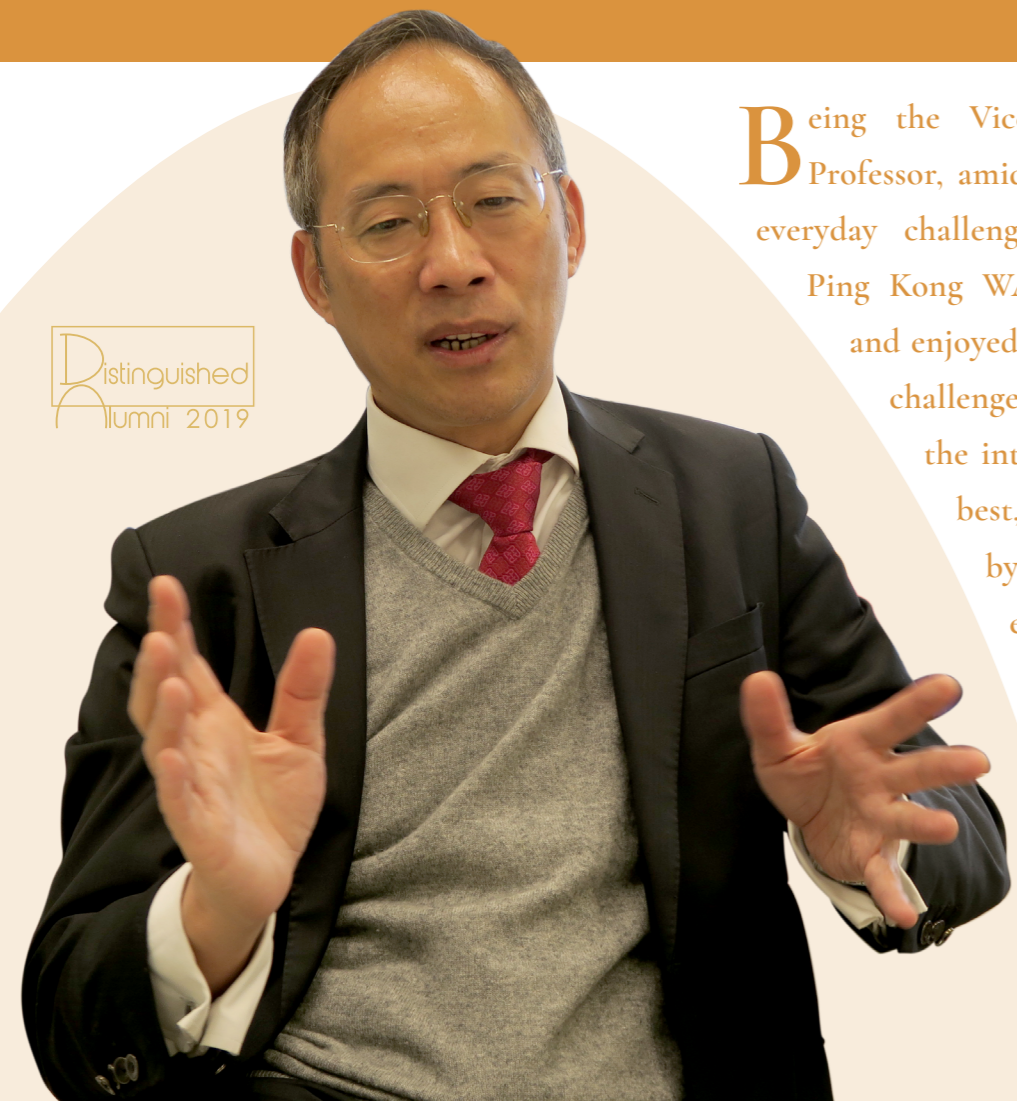


BE BOLD AND WALK YOUR OWN PATH



Distinguished Alumni 2019

Being the Vice President and Chair Professor, amidst his busy schedule and everyday challenges, Professor Alexander Ping Kong WAI followed his passions and enjoyed the process of addressing challenges. Professor Wai stated in the interview that “just do your best, but do not get obsessed by the end result”. He encouraged us to engage the present moment and be prepared for the unanticipated opportunities, as you will never know when they may emerge. His attitude and drive led him to become an established researcher and a productive administrator.

IR PROF. ALEXANDER PING KONG WAI
1981 BSc Graduate

Major Achievements

- Designated Deputy President and Provost of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- Vice President (Research Development) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- Fellow of The Optical Society (OSA)
- Fellow of Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
- Member of Council of Open University of Hong Kong
- Member of Research Grants Council
- Member of ASTRI University Advisory Council, Hong Kong Applied Science and

“Never give up!”

Professor Wai strived for the best even when the outcome was never certain. He chose Physics as his major because he found it interesting, even though it was not a popular major at the time. He returned to Hong Kong from the University of Maryland in 1996 and joined the Department of Electronic Engineering at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) as an Assistant Professor. There was limited research funding in Hong Kong during that time, yet despite all the difficulties, Professor Wai continued his research and received seven US patents on his inventions in optical packet-switching and other technologies. Followed his passion in research and wish to strive for research excellence, he established the Photonics Research Center and state-of-the-art research facilities at PolyU.

Apart from focusing on his own research, Professor Wai put heavy emphasis on teaching. He enjoyed teaching and the interaction with his students; and because of this passion, he spent his early morning to teach and work with his students on research topics, well before commencing the long day of administrative duties of the university. He treasured the time with his students and he was more than willing to offer his support and advice to them, hoping to guide them for an all-rounded development.

Professor Wai called himself an “accidental administrator”, as he took on the administrative role simply like taking a new challenge, and he enjoyed it. One example was his proactive engagement and drive in establishing collaboration network with industries. He made a proposal on a partnership collaboration between Boeing and PolyU, though during that time very few people would expect its successful launch in view of the young history of PolyU and its research achievements. Despite all

skepticism, Professor Wai forged ahead with the project. The proposal gained support from his colleagues and finally received endorsement from the university. In 2012, PolyU and The Boeing Company signed a Memorandum of Understanding which paved the way for the establishment of Hong Kong’s first Aviation Services Research Centre (ASRC).

Professor Wai led PolyU to scale high among the young universities; one significant achievement was the involvement of PolyU in China’s historic landing on the far side of the Moon in January 2019, by offering surveying technique for selecting the landing site and also an engineering team to build a camera control system.

Being a teacher, a researcher and a member of university management team, Professor Wai advised students to “enjoy and work hard. But do not try to do what everyone else is trying to do. Sometimes the road less travelled is the one that is more rewarding.” Get prepared and at the same time embrace the challenges in front of you, for those challenges may bring unexpected opportunities to you.

STUDENT REPORTER

“I was fortunate to have the chance to interview Professor Wai. His experience and advice taught me to look at life differently, to work with passion, and to treasure life’s every moment.”



Erin Fan, BSc Student