

CHE-MISTRY'S GOLDEN AGE HAS JUST BEGUN

INTERVIEW



Distinguished
Alumnus

PROF. CHI-MING CHE

1978 BSc Graduate
1982 PhD Graduate

Major Achievements

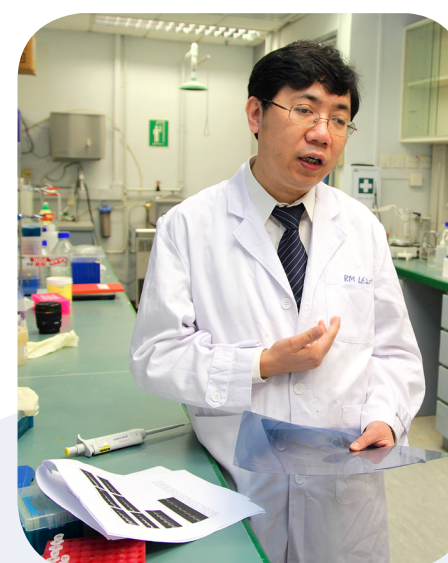
- Zhou Guangzhao Professor in Natural Sciences and the Head of Department of Chemistry
- Director of State Key Laboratory of Synthetic Chemistry, HKU-CAS Joint Laboratory on New Materials and Chemical Biology Centre of HKU
- One of the founding members and the Vice-President of The Academy of Sciences of Hong Kong
- Member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (1995)
- Foreign Associate of the US National Academy of Sciences (2013)
- Fellow of the World Academy of Sciences for the Advancement of Science in Developing Countries (2007)
- Recipient of the First Class Prize of the State Natural Science Award of China (2007), Centenary Prize of Royal Society of Chemistry (2013), Huang Yao-Zeng Organometallic Chemistry Award of the Chinese Chemical Society - Lifetime Achievement Award (2016) and Ryoji Noyori ACES Award (2016)

Professor Chi-Ming CHE, the Head of the Department of Chemistry, does not dislike Chemistry, but neither, he admitted, can he say that he likes Chemistry the most. Hearing this from a man of his reputation in academia caught me slightly off guard. I paused for a moment to take a breath and to collect myself in the aftermath of this revelation. Afterwards, I tried a little harder to study his features for any slight twitch or expression that would betray his words.



Professor Che's eyes possessed a wistful twinkle while recounting on his journey to where he stands right now. On his decision to read Chemistry during college, he recounted "not disliking" Chemistry and Mathematics, and doing better in the former. This therefore led him to pursue Chemistry as his major. His subsequent decision to pursue a PhD in Chemistry also felt like the most logical step — a natural consequence, for him. Nowadays, whilst juggling his multiple responsibilities as a lecturer and researcher here in Hong Kong and in the Mainland, he also found time to attend international conferences in Chemistry to stay up-to-date to the latest breakthroughs in research. In his early career (1983-1993) he made a visit to Caltech at least thrice a year to find inspiration for his work.

When asked about how he managed to juggle his commitments as a lecturer and researcher in Hong Kong and in the Mainland,



Professor Che shared that he thrived even under such a heavy workload and hectic schedule because he did not see what he did as work, per se, but as doing something that he liked. Despite the many accomplishments under his belt, he was a staunch believer of the value of

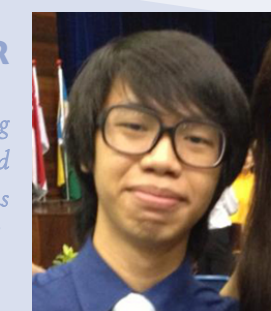
working hard. As a researcher, he thought that it was important to work with passion, especially not to work for honour and prize, but to move along. "It is hard to continue working if your emotions are like a roller coaster because of your expectations," he said.

Professor Che has been conducting research for over 35 years. More than that, he has been part of the Faculty of Science, first as a student, then as a staff member, for approximately 40 years. Not only has he witnessed the growth and development of the Faculty over the years, but also, he has grown together with the Faculty and has become a major driver of its growth as well. Since he celebrated his 60th birthday in 2017, many people have asked him what his plans are in the coming years. To these questions, he matter-of-factly stated that the Golden Age of his career has only just begun.



STUDENT REPORTER

"I am looking forward to learning about future breakthroughs in the field of Chemistry and the contributions that Hong Kong can make to the field."



John Josen Ng, BSc Student
(double major in Chemistry and Biological Sciences)