

# FROM SCIENCE TO SOCIETY

Distinguished  
Alumna



What do you think is the most important quality to you as a science student? Impeccable research skills? Enthusiasm to new knowledge? Creativity? They might all be true and important, but to Dr the Hon Rita Lai-tai FAN HSU, one of our Faculty's distinguished alumnae, there might be a different answer. To her, the ability to make use of the science training to serve and give was more important than solely being innovative and brilliant in science.

Dr the Hon Fan's experience in HKU was just like you and me, the only difference was the 1960s setting. She was a Chemistry and Physics student in HKU Science from 1964 to 1967. When talking about her experience in HKU, she said it was the most memorable experience for her. She lived in Lady Ho Tung Hall, and playing ball games

with her hall mates was her all-time favorite. Nonetheless the one unforgettable moment which burst her into laughter even today was laboratory session. She said she was once required to precipitate copper sulfate crystal, which was a very pretty blue crystal. It was a very



simple experiment and everybody managed to do that and left the laboratory early. It was only her, who struggled for a long time and still failed. The demonstrator at last gave her some finished product to hand in in order to let her go! Laboratory experience was not any easier for a very distinguished alumna like Dr the Hon Fan.

As we all know, Dr the Hon Fan did not pursue a science-related career, but she told us that her training in science contributed a lot to her career. "With a science background, you know how to think logically. We, science students, always work in an objective environment, like in the laboratory. You understand the reality for science – that you will not be able to get your desired result every time," she said. Being logical, realistic and

truthful had always been her life motto guiding her through her career, and her life. She was most renowned for being the President of Legislative Council from 1998 to 2008, and her science training enabled her to objectively evaluate different arguments and judge the issues. Similar to the promotion of science literacy,



Dr the Hon Fan also wished to present the work of Legislative Council to the general public, and to achieve easy accessibility of discussion papers. During her service, she electronised papers of the Legislative Council, including the President's Ruling on Committee Stage Amendments(CSAs) which explained in detail the reason behind each case; she also initiated the annual open day to enhances public's understanding of the operation of Legislative Council, in order to encourage public engagement in social affairs. She said the whole process was indeed a scientific approach — you spotted the problem, made a hypothesis, and conducted experiment to test on it. The lessons learnt from HKU Science was actually of life-long influence.

Having achieved a very successful career, Dr the Hon Fan reminded all science students that the undergraduate study was not solely about the pursuit of knowledge but also the training of your thinking. Its benefits were life-long and beyond your imagination.



## STUDENT REPORTER

"It was a really insightful meeting with Dr the Hon Fan. She was a very nice lady and really great to chat with. Her very bold choices in life was something I would like to learn from. She reminded me that there were always plenty of choices out there! It was important to bring along all the skills trained in the University to society as they could benefit you in ways you couldn't even imagine. It was a very interesting conversation about young people studying Chinese History too, because I was one of the very few high school students who still did Chinese History in DSE. It was really nice to see that there was really someone who took care of Chinese History students, as we were such a minority."



Celia Yan Yu YANG, BSc Student  
(major in Geology, minor in Biochemistry)

“ Being logical, realistic and truthful. ”

DR THE HON RITA LAI-TAI FAN HSU  
1967 BSc Graduate

## Major Achievements

- President of the Legislative Council, the Government of HKSAR (1997 - 2008)
- Member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) (2008 - 2018)