A few decades ago, there was merely a nimble team for marine biology; Professor Brian Morton pioneered to bring this discipline to Hong Kong and now here in HKU, there are a variety of undergraduate marine programmes. Professor Morton devoted to marine biology and was the first to teach marine biology in Hong Kong. He initiated the building of The Swire Institute of Marine Science (SWIMS), the first and biggest marine biology laboratory in Hong Kong. Both in teaching or research, Professor Morton shared that one had to be totally committed in order to pursue a career in this field.

Being marine biologists may face many challenges in reality, yet Professor Morton was optimistic in a way that he believed marine biologist can help making reclamation proposal as least destructive as possible. For example, they can change the pattern of water circulation, and model the effect based on existing information. In Hong Kong government’s endeavours of recreating shorelines, Professor Morton had helped the Hong Kong biologists to improve the fabric of reclamations, so they could function as natural shorelines. Altogether, Professor Morton had given expert views on how marine biologists were a vital part of maintaining the ecosystem of a region, so that it could reduce the effect of destructive constructions.

Professor Morton mentioned that the marine environment of Hong Kong was very unique within the context of both mainland China and the Southeast Asia. In his book Seashore ecology of Hong Kong, he had elaborated his point based on geology, hydrology, qualities with the Pearl River in the west and oceanic water in the east. The seashore of Hong Kong was a highly dynamic place and was extraordinary rich in marine life. Much more so than anywhere else in China.

Being a teacher, Professor Morton stimulated students’ learning by being upright, critical, and by asking questions that inspired students to think. He stressed that students need to be highly skilled and dedicated in the pursuit of marine biology, which involved a wide range of applied aspects such as fisheries, pollution, marine mammals, and plastic pollution in the ocean.

To nurture young scientists, Professor Morton set up a trust fund, with a wish to fund academic exchanges. While HKU students had a lot of opportunities to go overseas, Professor Morton highlighted that one must be open-minded in order to be a good exchange student. It was the willingness to accommodate that made the difference in learning.