

# THE Asia-Pacific University Rankings 2019: always developing

On many fronts – research, international collaborations, entrepreneurship, student learning and more – HKUST is active and eager to advance, says Wei Shyy

February 20, 2019

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The global higher education landscape has been changing rapidly over the past decade as the world moves towards a digital era in which economic growth and development rely increasingly on science, innovation and technology. Embracing these forces of change, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) is in prime position to assume a major role in advancing scientific and technological knowledge as it seeks to play its part in solving 21st-century problems with what we are best at – innovation, adaptation and making changes.

Since its establishment in 1991, HKUST has been breaking new ground in research and education, catapulting our reputation into an international brand. The university is truly blessed and fortunate to have recruited and developed many talents, resulting in multiple international awards and recognition, including the number one spot in the latest Times Higher Education Young University Rankings.

Today, China's burgeoning digital economy, together with the fast movement in the innovation-driven Greater Bay Area (which includes Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou and other cities in the vicinity), has set the scene for HKUST to play a substantial role in socio-economic development and collaboration, further encouraging us to put our creative ideas into practice in our community and beyond.

Colleagues of HKUST are now embarking on an ambitious plan of establishing a new campus in Guangzhou supported by Guangzhou University and the Guangzhou government. The Hong Kong and Guangzhou campuses will be fully synergised and complementary in scope and mission. The new site will pay special attention to the needs of the Greater Bay Area, with emphases on emerging, frontier and cross-disciplinary areas. We are confident that the new campus will enable HKUST to continuously advance education, research, business administration and knowledge transfer, all of which will contribute to the development of Hong Kong and the surrounding Greater Bay Area.

Advancing sustainable development in the context of science, technology and the policy domain will be an important mission for HKUST moving forward. We have recently launched a new initiative, Sustainable Smart Campus as a Living Lab (SSC), with the intention of transforming our campus into a platform for learning, experimenting and advancing new ideas and approaches related to smart living and working in the context of sustainability. We have committed substantial internal funding as well as donation support over the next three years to support our students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners in exploring and implementing new ideas on campus, with the aim of scaling up the successful ones to Hong Kong, the wider region and the globe. We will also promote the learning from less-than-successful endeavours to remind us of the importance of learning from failure.

On the international front, we have more than 250 global partners, providing many valuable collaborative opportunities for members of HKUST. In particular, international exchange opportunities enable our students to learn new ideas, identify and address issues and become responsible and caring citizens, all of which will help them to contribute to tackling global challenges in respect to sustainability, wealth distribution, unequal opportunities and ageing in communities.

In the past couple of years, HKUST has launched several new academic programmes – including data science, ocean science, decision analytics and public policy – as well as project-based, experientially motivated integrative systems to develop and foster students' creativity and design thinking capabilities. Efforts to provide training in entrepreneurship have also been ramped up as the university seeks to assist our students and staff in transferring their research into real-world applications that could be transformational to the development of society. We will also continue to develop new pedagogies and curricula to help our students learn with experiments and develop problem-solving techniques essential for forward-thinking entrepreneurs. Examples include a pilot programme with online learning platform Coursera, where HKUST students will be offered free certificates for massive open online courses, and the HKUST-Minerva Scholars Program, which will allow undergraduates to take highly interactive discussion-based online courses, adding to HKUST's portfolio of active learning pedagogical practices.

While receiving international recognition of our academic and research performance is a means of encouragement to us, HKUST places a great emphasis on holistic student development. Ongoing expansion work at our Hong Kong campus represents our concerted effort to create an environment where young minds bond together, interact with each other and learn beyond the classroom. The establishment of a multipurpose auditorium, an innovation building, new student hostels and a water sports centre are a few examples of our endeavour to help students grow together and develop into well-rounded individuals through a wide array of academic, cultural and well-being programmes.

We also work closely with our alumni to bring our students closer to the working world, through mentorship and a variety of internship opportunities enabling students to gain industry knowledge and make connections. To continue building an engaged and supportive alumni network, the university held its largest ever alumni reunion in November to reconnect with friends and update our alumni on the many exciting activities happening at their alma mater.

Going forward, HKUST is looking to continue strengthening its academic and research excellence for the betterment of our society by establishing distinctive areas of expertise and making contributions in data science, sustainability, public policy, autonomous systems and robotics, design and entrepreneurship, healthy ageing and fintech, complementing our new programmes and curricula concerning these research areas.

As we embark on our new journey to meet the challenges of the 21st century, we would like to work with partners from around the globe to advance our mission: namely, to develop talent and to contribute to socio-economic development as well as humanity. We also have to greatly thank the vision of our founders, contributions of our donors, support from the Hong Kong government, and effort of our alumni and staff, without whom we would not be in the position we are at today.

**Wei Shyy is president of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.**

**Source: Times Higher Education (THE)**

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