HKUST Alumni

HKUST Alumni Newsletter
Summer 2023

Edge
Gazing into the Future of education

Insight
Pushing the limits in the Gobi Desert

Meet our Tech legends

Jiaya Jia
Lydia Leung
Bianca Ho
Connecting our community with the HKUST spirit

Dear Alumni,

It is with great pride that we enter a new era for HKUST, with the pandemic behind us and our dual campus system running smoothly. What an apt moment to welcome all the members of the new Convocation Standing Committee. A warm congratulations to Terry Tsang, who succeeds Stanley Choi as our new HKUST Convocation Chairman. We wish Terry the very best in this important mission to spread goodwill among the various communities of the University.

Among our many successful initiatives at HKUST is the development of a strong entrepreneurial culture. We have so many wonderful case studies within our community. In this edition’s cover story, you will meet three alumni who exemplify the values of successful entrepreneurs, and whose companies are making waves in the global tech scene. SmartOvens’ Jaya Jia, Lydia Leung, the co-founder of Belun, and Tanya Ho from Wait, are proof of what one can achieve when you dream big and aim high.

HKUST has an abundance of candidates vying to be the next tech superstar. To help them achieve their dreams, we are dedicated to providing exceptional entrepreneurial education and support. Events such as the Entrepreneur Reception at the Science Park and the HKUST Unicorn Day enable our entrepreneurial community to exchange ideas and collaborate to take their innovative ideas to new heights. It is little wonder that HKUST recently swept 20 awards at the 48th International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva, Switzerland. We will continue to provide a robust platform to nurture innovative minds and launch promising ventures.

On its first anniversary this September, HKUST [Guangzhou] will commence undergraduate enrollment. We look forward to welcoming a new generation of students and future alumni. Indeed, our alumni network has grown considerably over the past three decades, even expanding across the globe. It is heartening to see an increasing number of in-person alumni gatherings being organized by enthusiastic alumni groups all around the world. I truly appreciate your HKUST spirit and devotion to the University. Your passion, commitment, and contributions play a vital role in enhancing HKUST’s global reputation and impact. Thank you and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours,
Nancy Ip
President

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HKUST Alumni • 1
HKUST has become a hotbed of innovation. In this story, we meet three alumni entrepreneurs who have battled through the challenges of setting up their own companies and emerged triumphantly. When one thinks of entrepreneurialism at HKUST, some descriptors come to mind: flexibility, adaptability, resourcefulness, intuition and hard work.

The three alumni are forging their way through obstacles in different industries, and exemplifying the spirit needed to achieve big things. We look at Smart manufacturing and related industries, Medical tech and sleep devices, and using WhatsApp Business API to supercharge customer experience. A common thread of these entrepreneurs is the ability to move with the era and battle through hard times. The results, as we shall see, are companies that mark the zeitgeist of our age.

Meet our tech legends

Jiaya Jia, SmartMore
2004 PhD Computer Science

Lydia Leung, Biton Technology
1999 BEng, 2000 MPhil and 2001 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering

Blanca Ho, Wall
2011 MBA Global Business and Economics
Mentors from HKUST were so important to me on my journey and inspired me to do top-of-the-line research. We could brainstorm among the best, which gave courage and belief.

A perfect vision for growth
Jaya Jia (2004 PhD Computer Science), Founder and Board Chairman of SmartMore, exemplifies many of the qualities that signify achievement. Jia has been a professor in Computer Science and Engineering at CUHK, and taught as a researcher for the likes of Alibaba, Microsoft and Tencent, learning about everything from automotive, to medical devices, and automation in manufacturing.

Since first studying Computer Science as an undergraduate at the Fudan University, he has made leaps and bounds in computer vision, artificial intelligence, and computational imaging, turning SmartMore into a unicorn along the way. “I spent more than ten years making photography with better quality, and now the algorithms for making photos on your phone are very powerful. When we integrate AI into that, the future looks bright.”

Bringing in the future
Founded in 2019, SmartMore applies AI in vision and optical technology, with a wealth of applications in smart manufacturing in a wide range of areas including precision machinery, automotive, consumer electronics, and new energy as well as smart factories. “It’s a new sphere that requires high standards and expertise. There is a misunderstanding – we are making all the processes automatic,” says Jia. In the future, workers will perform tasks in a separate room from machines, monitoring the production line – or it is beginning to happen now. “The world is changing from labor-intensive to automatic, and we will need people to carry out quality control. Having said that, AI can help cover up many human flaws, making it a safer net,” says Jia.

The shining star
As we visit the SmartMore Museum of Innovation in Shenzhen, we are witness to the many technologies that allow for deep learning and automation, ultimately making the production line more efficient and smarter. SmartMore’s futuristic vision is to complete four rounds of funding within 18 months, the fastest smart manufacturing technology company to become a unicorn in Hong Kong, boasting hundreds of staff globally.

AI could make the perfect growth scenario
As the world changes from labor-intensive to automatic, and we will need people to carry out quality control. Having said that, AI can help cover up many human flaws, making it a safer net,” says Jia. In the future, workers will perform tasks in a separate room from machines, monitoring the production line – or it is beginning to happen now. “The world is changing from labor-intensive to automatic, and we will need people to carry out quality control. Having said that, AI can help cover up many human flaws, making it a safer net,” says Jia.

Jia says: “SmartMore’s market reach encompasses many industries, and with AI on the rise, this potential can only get bigger. We are in the last potential window in human history, a new industrial revolution, upgrading workers to work with AI and ultimately this could make the world a much more exciting place.”

HKUST heritage a core strength
Jaya credits HKUST professors for their strong help along the way. Mentors that helped SmartMore rise include Prof. Harry Shum, who is now态势 Chairman of HKUST and had been Executive Vice President of Microsoft’s Artificial Intelligence and Research Group, along with Prof. Chi Kong Tang from HKUST Department of Computer Science and Engineering.

“These mentors from HKUST were so important to me on my journey and inspired me to do top-of-the-line research. They did give us a lot of pressure, pushing us to publish in the most influential publications, and helping me find my place among the top scientists in the field. We could brainstorm among the best, which gave courage and belief,” says Jia.

Jaya’s advice to budding entrepreneurs is simple. “I would say this to anyone who wants to be an entrepreneur – it is important to know how the world of business really runs. I learned that research is just research, when you want to do something, you need a unique and promising business model,” he says.

“You also need to have a philosophy about what you want to do and be willing to go through pain. Start-ups are time-consuming, people should take them seriously and be realistic about the timeline, especially with trials. If such a journey eventually leads to failure, you will waste time, resources, and investment. Fully understand all possible consequences before committing all your time to it. Think carefully and prepare well.”

Jaya is the holder of the Best Entrepreneur Award 2022 by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries.
Enjoy the journey, hone your communication skills, and work on your sales skills — you should be able to sell air.

Life is getting better
At the heart of many tech companies is a powerful ambition to create a wonderful world for all. Lydia Leung (BEng, 2000 MPhil and 2005 PhD Electrical and Electronic Engineering), CEO of Belun Technology, is working towards just that. Belun specializes in wearable medical AI solutions for screening illnesses, diagnosing sleep disorders, and preventing respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Established in 2016 with two co-founders and one of them also from HKUST, Belun’s key unique selling point is that it helps customers manage all these issues from the comfort of their own home.

Formerly Director of Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute (ASTRI), Lydia was able to take her business acumen and apply it to sensor packaging, bio-medical signal processing, and AI to create smart wearable devices. It also helps that many of her current colleagues are from ASTRI. “Although when we started we had a low salary and long working hours, we enjoyed the moments together and built an amazing team spirit,” Lydia says. “The team has different areas of expertise, so that allows us to be like a super Lego, plugging in, learning new things, and being able to catch up quickly,” she adds.

Banan introduced a new development that decodes the information that tends to fall into place. Indeed, COVID was the moment that Belun proved it was a force to be reckoned with, and the company’s remote monitoring system, used in care homes globally to monitor the breath rate of patients in various conditions, helped to keep people at home.

Sleep is the key to health
Belun’s success was not unnoticed, and soon Lydia received clearance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the Belun Sleep System, which became the world’s first wearable device to diagnose obstructive sleep apnoea with the help of AI. The invention, marketed B2B to doctors and businesses, has the potential to reach millions of people in hospitals, at home, while also providing massive savings on chronic disease management, which will become increasingly important as we age.

“Belun started examining sleep and the root causes of unsatisfactory sleep, and how AI can address those issues. Data and hardware, thus work in tandem to assist physicians in treating people. Sleep is very special. It’s a personal journey that cannot be solved by just taking a pill,” says Lydia.

Perfect data for the product
Accurate data is very hard to come by, which is why the team started from scratch to create the Belun Sleep System, looking at both technology and wearability. "The concept came from a designer in Belgium, who made sure the ring would not rotate during sleep, meanwhile, they fixed for IP protection. "The special thing about this ring is that it is produced in a factory in Hong Kong," says Lydia.

A factory in Fo Tan, along with facilities in Taiwan, are the key to the business, making Belun part of the reindustrialization movement in Hong Kong. "We discovered lots of diseases were related to lack of sleep, and while there are many gadgets in the market, there is nothing that doctors can trust," says Lydia. Popularity meant that the phone was ringing off the hook, and Belun has since developed a B2C sleep ring. Now the team is looking to expand into South East Asia and the United States.

A wearable doctors want to use
"Being a B2B business, we don’t compete with the likes of Apple watches, we are really more of a medical device, rather than a fashion-driven wearable. You can put so much money into marketing, and being a brick-and-mortar retail operation would ruin the business — so we are focused on being a device doctors love," says Lydia.

Lydia treasured her time at HKUST because of its community, and advice from mentors throughout her career. "Even long after I left the University, HKUST professors continued to give me advice, particularly Professor Emeritus, Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering, Roger Cheng. That’s why I go back so often," Lydia adds.

So what advice would she give to budding student entrepreneurs? "Enjoy the journey, hone your communication skills, and work on your sales skills — you should be able to sell air," Lydia adds. “And control your spending — you should be working on hard-messy-down furniture in a down to earth location — beg, borrow and steal!”
From banking to the entrepreneurial excellence

Blanca Ho (MBA Global Business and Economies), Co-founder and COO of Wati, took a 180-degree turn from her life as a banker at JP Morgan and entered the tech industry. Joining Ken Young (BEng Computer Science) in 2018, the duo set up chatbot company Clice AI, and also launched a new product Wati in 2020. The organization has focused on automating conversations and has pivoted from enterprise to medium businesses, creating personalized conversations at scale, with easy-to-use customer engagement software built on WhatsApp Business API (Application Programming Interface).

The software helps with everything from commerce to customer requests. “We saw increasingly that businesses were using WhatsApp to deal with customers, but they had little expertise and knowledge on how to scale this service to enhance customer experience. Wati was formed to help them deal with this crucial make-or-break aspect of business,” says Blanca.

Wati rises above

Wati serves thousands of customers across more than 70 countries, piggybacking on the trend for companies to use WhatsApp for business, but also their ability to automate customer requests. “There has been a fundamental shift of people wanting to use WhatsApp to reach businesses, whereas in the past they just wanted to call,” says Blanca.

As we all know, calling customer hotlines makes many people want to tear their hair out, a situation that has aided Wati’s growth. It now has around 120 people globally, having moved office several times, landing in Canton Road, where we are sitting today. The company has recently raised US$23 million from Tiger Global Management, DST, Sequoia, SoftBank, and investors betting on the company’s growth prospects in Southeast Asia.

Entrepreneurial guidance for students

Wati’s success story came only after many years of hard work – for students who want to replicate their success, what should they do? Entrepreneurialism is not for everyone, you can think about joining a high-growth startup or even Wati,” she says with a laugh. “Your mistakes while you are learning will not be on your back, and you will have support to learn, along with not having to pay Hong Kong rents,” she adds.

Clice AI was focused on helping large enterprises, but Wati also saw opportunities with SMEs, who are ardent users of WhatsApp. At the same time, they went from multiple channels to WhatsApp, only aided by COVIO, which pushed automation in businesses, and allowed Wati to be in international markets. “We are very international in nature, with the nationalities alone at our board meeting. It’s global in our DNA and we are everywhere that WhatsApp is,” Blanca says.

Wati is aimed at aggressive growth, and with the rise of automation, who would bet against them? With online retailers growing in number, Wati can be the difference maker by offering consumers deals, asking for feedback, providing order notification, and even addressing carts abandoned by consumers. “We found WhatsApp to also be a very effective platform for customers to provide feedback, with much better response rates, when they normally are not bothered to fill out generic feedback forms,” Blanca says.

HKUST experience the key difference

In her career, Blanca says her participation in the NetMission Ambassador Program during HKUST was especially valuable. The program aims to bring together a network of dedicated young volunteers working on collaborative and sustainable internet governance, and Blanca used that to participate in United Nations forums and gain international experience. “Working with HKUST people allows you to feel their passion, it’s not just a job and transactional, they love networking and learning,” Blanca adds.
Gazing into the future of education

Dr. Sean McMinn is helping HKUST balance the fundamentals of education with the advances of artificial intelligence (AI).

AI is the talk of the town, and Dr. Sean McMinn, Director of the Center for Education Innovation (CEI), has been guiding HKUST to take a measured approach that benefits staff and students – balancing opportunities and risks of programs such as ChatGPT. The generative artificial intelligence tool, and other programs, are giving educators food for thought, and are changing the landscape. “AI has been on our radar for some time, particularly in language education, but now it’s become more advanced and that brings with it a range of complexities,” he says. In the media, many focus on the potential for ChatGPT to help students cheat, but this is “just the tip of the iceberg,” Dr. McMinn says.

Dr. McMinn, a Canadian native and former journalist, has close to two decades in applying technology in education, having started at HKUST in 2005 (including a stint away from the University). His experiences allow him to see the complexity of dealing with AI in a university. “We should look beyond this simplistic vision to embrace a holistic view of AI’s potential. Chasing plagiarism is a race we can’t win, and we do a disservice to our students because we should examine how it can enhance and transform teaching and learning,” he adds.

The game changer

One area which is of interest is human-AI collaboration for assessment and providing feedback to students. “We need to rethink what we teach, because when students go out to the working world new skills will be required,” he says. As AI begins to impact the workforce, students will find themselves graduating into an even more competitive environment. “Having said this, AI is not good at making decisions, understanding technical and emotional awareness, or even meta-cognition,” says Dr. McMinn. There is a consensus that jobs including paralegal work, copywriting or advanced manufacturing, will be heavily automated and hence disrupted. AI should hence be incorporated into course design, and focus placed on creativity, problem solving and adaptability, rather than knowledge retention and creation. “We are trying to help faculty members see if they can redesign their assessments, and their processes, and use generative AI to access knowledge and learning,” he says.

A concern for educators is knowing if students are ultimately learning the content from courses. They must be trained in the proper use of AI rather than just submitting questions and having the answers without critically looking at the task at hand, and internalizing the knowledge. No teachers, students should not be solely relying on technology,” Dr. McMinn says.

Ethics and bias in the mix

A key issue to grapple with is the ethical implications of using ChatGPT within education. There are a number of flaws within the tools, many of which are subtle. The concept of ‘latent persuasion’ for example, means people are being pushed to conceptualize subjects and understand them with inherent biases. “We might not even know this is happening, and the majority of our students are not trained in AI, so there is a danger of cultural hegemony, especially as the databases are from commercial entities,” says Dr. McMinn.

To grapple with these not insignificant challenges, CEI at HKUST has set up a taskforce in AI identifying which courses could be geared towards critical thinking in this new learning context. Advances in technology have added to a rather busy set of responsibilities for Dr. McMinn, which includes blended and experiential learning, virtual reality and the metaverse, along with anything that enhances teaching and learning. His role includes formulating guidance for faculty members on course enhancement, workshops for teachers, and managing funds for faculty members to improve courses. Already, progress is being made within Business and Engineering in particular, to generate case studies and promote design-based thinking.

Placing AI into the education mix

HKUST now has an educational generative AI fund, with a call to faculty members to improve their courses with AI. For Dr. McMinn, an exciting development could be increased use of augmented reality (AR), with wide-ranging applications from guiding students within a laboratory to helping them generate with the dashboard of an airplane, among countless other learning scenarios.

Combined with AI, students could be immersed within AR, virtual reality and metaverses to help them learn tasks that are dangerous, or impossible to recreate in the physical world. “This will require so much equipment that it will be a slower process to integrate into the classroom than the likes of ChatGPT and AI which are available to students now,” says Dr. McMinn.

Compared to many universities that are keeping their heads in the sand, HKUST is powering forward, staying true to the T in its name that stands for Technology. “We see emerging technology will impact learning, so it makes sense for us to at least be able to assess the impact and plan for the future. Most people recognize AI can enhance teaching, and want to integrate it into learning.”
HKUST Convocation

HKUST Convocation enters bold new era

We are absolutely delighted to introduce the new Convocation Standing Committee for 2023 to 2025.

Chairman
Terry Tang
2004 BEng (CIVIL)
2006 MPH (CIVIL)
2014 MPA
CEO, Hashead Limited

Vice Chairman
Marco Chen
2018 MBA
General Manager, Fang Group

Committee Member
Ivan Chan
2007 MBA
General Manager Group Public Affairs, John Soke & Sons (HK) Ltd

Kristie Chen
2017 MBA
Senior Manager – Customer Services, 7-Eleven (China) Development, CLP

Brian Cheng
2012 BBA (MCCIT)
Vice President, Morgan Stanley

Patrick Ng
2008 BEng (CIVIL)
Engineer, The Government of the HKSAR

Fanny Yuen
2005 BBA (MARK)
Founder, Moki Cheh

Terence Tsang
2004 BEng (CHEM)
CTO, Hashead Limited

Fanny Yip
2018 MBA
Specialist in Orthopaedics, Dr. Terry’s Hospital

A debt of gratitude
The new committee would first and foremost like to give their utmost thanks to the Immediate Past Chairman, Stanley Choi, for his outstanding work and exceptional contributions to the development of student social innovation initiatives during his four-year tenure. Stanley has been instrumental in creating a supportive environment for students to pursue their social innovation endeavors and making a positive impact on their communities.

Leadership links to the Alma Mater
Creating strong links between our alumni and their alma mater is a key mission. To this end, newly elected Convocation Chairman Terry Tang has been actively involved in the Convocation Standing Committee since 2019. With brother and fellow committee member Terence Tsang, they have been making significant donations to the Alumni Endowment Fund. During his time as Chairman, Terry will work closely with other committee members to offer help and advice to HKUST, promote good relations between the University and the public, contribute to fundraising efforts, and support HKUST’s strategic goals.

Let’s join forces
You can help us by partnering with us and building a strong community together. With the Alumni Endowment Fund in place, we have a key financial resource to support student-focused initiatives and programs. Please join us to make a stronger community and further raise the profile of our University!

Sing loud and proud

We love HKUST, and so do you! Now, to show your passion for our alma mater, it’s time to learn our university anthem! Unveiled in March, the first ever official anthem was created by alumni, staff, students and a team of professionals to show the world our core values. It all started when Council Member Edith Shih and Court Chairman The Hon. Andrew Liao began to consider how their love for HKUST could be encapsulated in a song.

A total of 45 entries comprising lyrics, melody and compositions had been submitted to the University Anthem Working Group by students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends of HKUST and HKUST (Guangzhou). Next, a selection committee consisting of University members and musical experts including Music Director Emeritus of Hong Kong Sinfonietta Yip Wing Sze, selected a melody composed by alumni Prof. Kelvin Yuen (2014, MSc Economical), Affiliate Assistant Professor of Economics at HKUST and Assistant Professor from the Thurst of Urban Governance and Design at HKUST (Guangzhou), and he also took part in the lead vocal recordings. The anthem premiered at the “Timeout HKUST” event on the Clear Water Bay campus with a music video that proved both eye-catching and widely shared.

Top winners share their passion
The winning lyrics were written by incoming HKUST postgraduate student Jia Xianzhang, who crafted inspirational lines in Putonghua. The Cantoneses version was written by renowned lyricist Chris Shum, while the English version was produced by a team comprising HKUST Professor of Humanities Dr. Isaac Droscha, Convenor of the University Anthem Working Group Edith Shih and freelance writer Philip Yeung. The arrangement came from renowned musician Nick Choel Yin.

A team effort in harmony
Special thanks go to our alumnus Lawrence Tsui (2003 BEng Computer Engineering), the music producer, who is himself a renowned professional drummer. We must also thank our three alumni professional singers and lead vocalist Lam van Yee (2008 BBA Financial), Clara Lee (2008 BBA Accounting) and Edwin Wan (2011 BBA Global Business). Finally, the University Philharmonic Orchestra and the University Choir, under the baton of Dr. John Cheng (2019 MPhil Humanities, 2009 MPhil Humanities) and Francis Noi (2009 BSc Chemistry), respectively, and with many alumni among their ranks, receive our gratitude for their stellar work.

Others contributing their talent included HKUST Pro-Chancellor Dr. John Chan Cho-Chak, Court Chairman The Hon. Andrew Liao, Council Chairman Prof. Harry Shum, President Prof. Nancy Ip, Founding President Prof. Woo Chia Wai, HKUST (Guangzhou) Founding President Prof. Lionel Ni, as well as other Council members, senior management, staff and students of the two campuses.
Alumni entrepreneurs come out in force

It was an enlightening day with our alumni, as the Development and Alumni Office co-organized the HKUST Alumni Entrepreneur Reception on March 27, 2023. With more than 300 participants, the event was organized with the Hong Kong Science Park (HKSTP), HKUST Entrepreneurship Center, supported by HKUST Business School, and saw a full house.

More than 30 entrepreneurs showcased their company offerings, including content, biotech, AI, healthcare, fintech, e-commerce, food & beverage and more, exploring ideas and new opportunities. The day was capped with President Prof. Nancy Ip and HKSTP Chairman Dr. Sunny Chan delivering inspiring speeches on the support for the local startup community and the future of Hong Kong’s innovation and technology ecosystem.

Strongly committed to entrepreneurship

The event shone a spotlight on the University’s commitment and efforts to support the next generation of entrepreneurs and foster an innovative and entrepreneurial culture. HKUST has cultivated over 1,800 startups, including 9 unicorns and 81 exits, creating over HK$400 billion in economic value. Efforts to develop alumni-entrepreneurial networks continue apace – we aim to connect alumni entrepreneurs with each other through offers and discounts on our Alumni Apps. If you have launched your own business, we would love to stay in touch with you to learn more about your start-up.

Action in the Greater Bay Area (GBA)

For those wishing to connect to the GBA, there are a variety of options including HKUST Shenzhen-Hong Kong Collaborative Innovation Research Institute, which rides on the state-level initiatives of the GBA and opportunities in Fuli District. This unique and strategic platform allows HKUST members to participate in major research and development projects, reach out for opportunities and funding, commercialize research, and carry out executive education programs. Alumni are also welcome to use its facilities. On top of this, HKUST Shenzhen Research Institute has developed into a prominent research, training, incubation base and local talent pool. Run jointly by both Shenzhen-based institutions, the Blue Bay Incubation Program provides incubation services for high-potential start-ups with technology, entrepreneurship, venture capital, industry, and resources from Shenzhen and Hong Kong. In Nansha District, the Guangzhou HKUST Foshan Ying Tang Research Institute bridges innovation, commercial technology, and youth entrepreneurship. They also run a Guangdong Hong Kong and Macao International Youth Entrepreneur Hub with a Technology Seeding Program. In other areas of the GBA, the HKUST Foshan Center for Technology Transfer and Commercialization nurtures high-end talent, incubating many start-ups since launching in 2021.

Alumni Endowment Fund

The Alumni Endowment Fund Student Start-up Grant plays a key role in that first step towards fulfilling the dream of kick-starting your own business.

Join in the entrepreneurial spirit

HKUST has long been the place where sparks fly for entrepreneurs. “Incorporating Innovation and Entrepreneurship in our Spirit” is among five strategic objectives for HKUST’s Strategic Plan for 2021-2028.

The Office of Knowledge Transfer (OKT) assists the Associate Vice-President for Research and Development (Knowledge Transfer) in areas of Knowledge Transfer (KT) strategic planning, implementation of KT missions, governance of KT operations, and more. Its major functions include management and protection of HKUST intellectual property, technology marketing, fostering research collaborations and funding from industry, technology licensing and commercialization, project and contract development, and enhancing technology transfer and start-up incubation through various funding schemes and programs.

Under the umbrella of OKT, the Entrepreneurship Center supports innovation and entrepreneurship at HKUST, running its signature Unicorn Day, HKUST-Sino One Million Dollar Entrepreneurship Competition, HackUST, Entrepreneurship Week, seminars, study tours, seed funds, the BASE and MentorHub, and more. Meanwhile, the HKUST Business School, as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the University, converts research and technology into business and industry applications.

Office of Knowledge Transfer

Entrepreneurship Center

Entrepreneurship

An idea

Funding

A start-up

A success
Pushing the limits in the Gobi Desert

For extreme sports enthusiasts, China’s Gobi Desert is a legendary location to test if you have what it takes to challenge yourself, go through your comfort zone, and succeed. From April 30 to May 4, 2023, HKUST warriors from the EMBA, Kellogg-HKUST EMBA, and MBA programs joined alumni family members for The 17th Xuanzang Road Business School Gobi Challenge (第十七届玄奘之路戈壁挑战赛), an annual tradition for HKUST’s EMBA community.

Starting its life as the "Pilgrimage Journey of Xuanzang," the event retraces the footsteps of a Buddhist monk on his journey to India, symbolizing the pioneering spirit that emerged during the Tang Dynasty 1,300 years ago. Postponed twice due to the pandemic, this year’s event saw approximately 5,000 students and alumni from top global business schools in China joining.

**Groundbreaking event for HKUST**

This is the first time Kellogg-HKUST EMBA and MBA alumni and students have participated, with 61 brave runners making it the largest number of HKUST participants taking up the gauntlet to date. The teams trained for over six months to prepare for the grueling race conditions, navigating over 100 kilometers of untraveled Gobi Desert on foot, with extreme temperature fluctuations and dust storms at an altitude of over 1,000 meters. This challenge demanded physical strength, perseverance, teamwork, cooperation, courage, and endurance. Despite the obstacles, the teams completed the 325-kilometer-long road over four days and three nights, showcasing their determination and resilience. Congratulations must go to the EMBA team who achieved the best result this year, winning six awards with the MBA team, and taking home the Best Creative Award and the Best Popularity Award for their video. "The tough and unforgettable experience enriched our lives and enlightened our minds: it is our life-long treasure," said Wang Qiu (2022 EMBA).

**Challenge accepted**

The race offered valuable insights into cultivating perseverance for the challenges and difficulties of the fast-evolving business world. Team leader You Yong (2006 EMBA) said, "We departed together, arrived at the finish line together (一鼓作氣，一網打盡). This strengthened the spirit of HKUST and fostered genuine friendship, showing everyone has infinite potential to overcome difficulties and limits."

You are welcome to join the race. Please keep an eye out for the recruitment information next year.

**Check out the video capturing many touching moments:**

Wang Qiu celebrates crossing the finish line

You Yong thanks all the participants during the celebration banquet

Xue Gu (2012 EMBA) leads runners into the finish Gobi Desert

Keep up with all the action

Your classmates have been very active! See what they have been up to below. We also want to see your stories, so remember to share your photos and updates with us via this QR code.

K Kobe Yung
2016 BEng CIVIL | 2018 MPhil CIVIL
I am honored to receive the HKIE Young Engineer Arthur & Louise May Memorial Scholarship Award for 2022/23. This supports my PhD research in Pipelining Offshore Wind and Digital Twin Modeling under the Department of Naval Architecture, Ocean and Marine Engineering at the University of Strathclyde.

For my first film, Lost Love (失樂園), I received the White Mulberry Award for a First Feature Film Special Mention at the 25th Far East Film Festival in Udine, Italy. It was a delight to see European audiences interested in new Hong Kong directors.

Ko Sing Fung
2007 BSc CHEM
I am proud to have received the 3rd Prize for the Best Poster at the 2007 HKUP University Student Science Conference in Hong Kong. The event was a great opportunity to share my research on the properties of colloidal dispersions.

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Ray Au
2018 BSc BDOT
We are thrilled to have walked down the aisle and become husband and wife on November 9, 2022!

Nick Mines
2010 MBA
It’s amazing to be in this year’s Private Equity International’s 40 under 40. Future Leaders of Private Equity

Tyler Cheng
2022 BSc CHEM
I am excited to have been nominated as a District Youth Community Building Committee member in Tsuen Wan for 2023-25.

Florian Smeritschnig
2014 MSc IMT
I published my first book, The 2%: Compose Your Consulting Case Interview in January this year. It explains in detail how to break into top-tier consulting firms and is based on my 10 years of experience and 1,000 interviews.

Henry Chang
1999 BEng ELEC | 2001 MPhil ELEC
From engineering to law, I am thrilled to have launched a full-service law firm, Chang & Co. Please drop by and say hello!
Light, cameras, action!

HKUST people are a busy bunch, let’s see what they have all been up to of late. You won’t want to miss out!

Guangzhou Here We Come
Standing Committee Members of the HKUST Convocation and representatives of the alumni associations visited HKUST Guangzhou in May, keeping abreast of its latest developments with its President, Prof. Lionel N. They also took this opportunity to tour the HKUST SZ-HK Collaborative Innovation Research Institute and the Shenzhen Research Institute.

The Fun Never Stops
A special viewing of Lost Love hosted by the HKUST Alumni Association (AA) on March 9 saw alumni director Ka Sing Fung and actor Alan Luk attending, while its members and friends participated in a coaching session by coach Fikik Hook, from the Hong Kong Sevens team, at the HKUST X CITY-HK Rugby Fun Night in the following week.
On March 29, the Web N Night allowed enthusiasts to talk about all things crypto, tokens, blockchain and decentralized web. In April, AA visited the Tsz Shan Monastery. The day included a visit to the monastery, a museum tour, and a meditation session. On April 25, the IT & Big Data Meet-Greet Dinner saw computer science, data science, AI, and other IT experts meet, and alumni finance professionals shared insights and views on the latest trends on May 25. The Inclusive Para Sports Day also took place in the same month.

Dragon Determination
The Alumni Dragon Boat Club was crowned champion of the Kwun Tong Dragon Boat Race Silver Cup Open Competition in April, which marks their first victory since the end of the pandemic. At the Dragon Boat Festival, they beat some very strong competition to finish fourth in one of the small boat competitions.

Go Golfing
The Alumni Golf Club gathered on the greens for a friendly game at New Course, Flamingo in May. Another gathering was held on the same course in June.

Healthy Pursuits
The Mainland Alumni Association joined outdoor bicycling at Tai Mei Tui in March, followed by a barbecue. Meanwhile, the Alumni Spring Tea Chat in April was co-organized with the HKUST Shenzhen Research Institute, featuring a ChatGPT theme, with a Chinese tea tasting.

All Together Now
The University Chair Alumni Association joined founding conductor Mr. Chiang Wai Man and current conductor Mr. Francis Ma, during shooting of the music video for the HKUST’s first-ever official anthem in March. There was also an annual dinner in April, a fun occasion complete with music.

Terrific Toasting
The MBA Alumni Toastmasters Club kicked off 2023 with its first meeting featuring prepared speeches and a Table Topic session in January. It was followed by a series of fabulous events in the following months including a New Member Speech Night, regular meetings, a New Member Welcome Night, a special guest workshop on Harnessing the Power of the Big Four Leadership Archetypes, and a Speech Marathon.

Rowing to Win
More than 120 Rowing Club alumni and coaches gathered at the Club’s Gala Dinner held in April to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Rowing Club. Prof. King Chow, Acting Dean of Students, alongside other guests of honor, celebrated this milestone with them.

All We Need is Wine
The Alumni Wine Association had its annual dinner with a selection of wine and delicious Chinese cuisine, blind tasting sessions; and a lucky draw. They were thrilled to have our Vice-President for Institutional Advancement Prof. Yang Wang, as their guest of honor. There was also Free Flow Drinks held on April 13, with 4 wines especially selected by a sommelier.

The Human Touch
In February, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences organized the 12th Anniversary Undergraduate Alumni Hiking and Lunch event in Sai Kung.

Tech Tops
The Master of Technology Management Alumni Association held a reunion dinner on April 23.

Enterprise Excellence
The Engineering Enterprise Management Alumni Association organized an Alumni annual dinner at the China Garden in January.

Healthy Pursuits

I Believe I Can Fly
The Mechanical Engineering Graduates’ Association held its Engineers’ Dream Takes Flight Workshop teaching children the basic concepts of science and engineering principles in a fun and enjoyable way.
Wonders of the world

It’s not just on the home front that we enjoy many gatherings, mainland and international alumni also know how to have a great time. Here’s what they are doing.

California Dreaming

The Northern California Alumni Chapter gathered in January at the Lord’s Grace Christian Church for a board game event, where they enjoyed lunch and played games, including chess, card games, and board games. In February, they also held a hiking event along the scenic Stanford Dish Loop.

Rabbit Joy

Chinese New Year’s Eve dinner of the Ontario Alumni Chapter brought together HKUST friends and family in Ontario. In April, Business School Alumnae Drinks was also held with Professor Veronique A. Lafont-Vinard, Executive Director of Career Development and Corporate Outreach (School of Business and Management). Meanwhile, on May 6, alumni gathered at Toronto Botanical Garden followed by a Volunteer Trail Clean Up held along the Kay Gardner Beltline Trail the next day. Finally, on May 28, the Spring Picnic Day at Siblave Point Provincial Park brought together alumni from the universities in Hong Kong.

Vision of Vancouver

Alumni in Vancouver enjoyed a spring breakfast gathering held in March at the charming mix of business and residential areas of Coal Harbor.

Hitting the Pub

The HKUST community in the UK gathered for drinks in Covent Garden, London, in March, and Soho in April. Drins were also held with School of Business Professor Veronique A. Lafont-Vinard in May in London.

Barcelona Fiesta

In March, a team of four full-time MBA students traveled to Barcelona to participate in the prestigious Roland Berger International MBA Case Competition. While there, they also had the opportunity to meet up with alumni in the city over tapas.

Tokyo Calling

Alumni congregated in Tokyo in January for a lunch gathering organized in collaboration with alumni from HKU, CUHK, and CityU. The event provided a platform for individuals interested in connecting locally and globally and was a great success. The Alumni Network in Japan has just been established with its AGM held in May.

Sydney for the Win

In March, alumni in Sydney gathered for a dinner filled with laughter and great conversation.

Leveling up in Vietnam

A HKUST delegation to Vietnam was led by Prof. Yang Wang, Vice-President for Institutional Advancement. In January, the Business Trip saw a wonderful lunch gathering with Ho Chi Minh City alumni.

Beijing Bastion

The Beijing Alumni Chapter held its 2023 Spring Orientation in April. This event served as a welcome ceremony for new alumni and a platform for connecting new and old alumni.

Super Shenzhen

The MSc in Economics program held an alumni dinner in Shenzhen in March, where over 100 alumni gathered to network and reconnect after months of pandemic restrictions. The event included a virtual welcome speech from the Acting Department Head Professor David Cook, and an address by the Academic Director Professor Tao Zhu.

Pushing to the Limits

Alumni from the EMBA, Kellogg-HKUST EMBA and MBA programs took part in the Xuanzang Road Business School Goes Challenge in Dunhuang, from April 10 to May 4. The race covered 121 km through the desert and lasted four days, testing the participants’ physical strength, teamwork, and perseverance. Despite the challenges, the teams achieved remarkable results and were recognized with several awards. Notably, the MBA team, participating for the first time, earned an impressive 4th-place finish.

Guangzhou Milestone

On March 4, the Guangzhou Alumni Chapter held a visit to HKUST (Guangzhou), marking the first of its kind. President Prof. Lonne Ni and other senior management warmly welcomed the alumni, who had the opportunity to explore the campus.

Lion City Action

Members of the Singapore Alumni Chapter attended the dinner hosted by the Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office in Singapore on February 1, while a hiking trip in late February to Chestnut Nature Park saw alumni go to the Bukit Timah Reserve and Rail Corridor. It was followed by another fun trail walk in March. There was also a monthly mixer in April, an excellent time for a get-together, with Canadian alumni joining as well.
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