

**Opening Address for the
Doctoral and Master's Degrees Graduation Ceremony of the
Chinese University of Hong Kong**

11 November 2023

Dean Wolff, distinguished faculty members, esteemed graduates, ladies and gentlemen. What an honour it is for me to be standing here this afternoon addressing all of you on this momentous and joyous occasion!

Let me begin by extending my sincere congratulations to graduates receiving their postgraduate awards today. To all of you, you have been admitted to degrees from one of the finest academic institutions in the world. We gather here today to recognize and celebrate the great deal of hard work, dedication, and perseverance that have culminated towards this day, on which you receive the well-deserved fruits of your labor.

But I must also congratulate and thank those who have walked with you throughout your academic journey. To graduates' families, loved ones, teachers, and mentors, I extend my gratitude and congratulations for having nurtured a new generation of legal talent who will no doubt go on to achieve great things in society. Today is a day of celebration for you, as much as it is for the graduates, of whom you have good reason to be very proud.

The study of Law, aside from being intellectually challenging and stimulating, opens our eyes to the intricate workings of the society in which we live. That is because our society is governed by the rule of Law, and the Law permeates virtually every aspect of our everyday lives. As graduates of postgraduate qualifications in Law, you will have gained not only an advanced knowledge in specialized areas of the Law, but also

a sound and informed understanding of the real world, into which you are all about to set foot as you begin your professional careers.

I, too, was once a graduating Law student. To this day, I vividly recall being filled with a sense of excitement to begin my legal career, but at the same time a degree of anxiety about the many challenges ahead. No doubt, that is how many of you are feeling today. While today marks an end to your academic journey in the Law, it also marks the beginning of a new chapter in your professional lives. And with new beginnings, come new challenges. That is so whether you are about to enter the legal profession for the first time, or continuing your professional pursuits equipped with the new knowledge gained from your postgraduate education.

The challenges that await you are numerous, and the road ahead is not going to be easy. We live in a complex and fast-paced world that is getting increasingly sophisticated every day. As legal professionals and academics, you will be expected to stay abreast of the latest developments in the field of your expertise. You will be expected to produce results, often under tight deadlines. Most of all, for those of you who will go on to practice Law, you will be expected to apply your legal knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems.

While I am confident that you are well-equipped to tackle these challenges head-on with the education you have received, I wish to offer you 4 pieces of advice, gathered from my career as a prosecutor, which I hope will serve as guiding principles throughout and beyond your careers in the Law. These 4 pieces of advice center around 4 core values which, in my view, are particularly important. They are: Integrity, justice, knowledge, and passion. Let me explain each in turn.

The first piece of advice is perhaps the most important of all. That is: **Be persons of integrity and good character.** To be a person of

integrity and good character entails that you align yourselves with the virtues of honesty and probity in all that you do. To my mind, only by being honest to yourself and to those around you does one truly achieve. For as the saying goes, personality opens doors, but it is character that keeps them open.

The importance of integrity and good character is only magnified in this day and age where competition is fierce and the emphasis is on results and output. As great as the temptation may sometimes be to achieve recognition and success at the expense or compromise of one's principles and standards, always remember that doing so comes at a severe cost. Successes or results achieved through improper or dishonest means bring no sense of fulfilment. You must not succumb to such temptations. Instead, work hard to achieve your goals by doing only what is right and fair. Follow the rules. Maintain high moral standards and good reputation, both in your professional and personal lives. Adhere strictly to integrity, honesty, and probity. With time, your success will come. And it will come with a tremendous sense of satisfaction.

Secondly: **Be committed to upholding the rule of Law and serving the public good.** The rule of Law is the golden thread running through the fabric of our society. It is essential that future lawyers like yourselves are committed to upholding it with unwavering faith, strong determination, and enduring perseverance. At the same time, bear in mind that as future lawyers, you share a responsibility to contribute back to the society that has nurtured your growth. A facet of that responsibility is to help those around you better understand the role of the Law in society, as well as the processes behind its operation.

In recent years, it has unfortunately been commonplace to hear misconceived criticisms against Hong Kong's National Security Law, or NSL in short, suggesting that it erodes the rule of Law and compromises

the long-established notion of judicial independence. Such suggestions are, as all of you will appreciate, plainly wrong and misconceived and, as a result, totally unfair.

As Law graduates, I encourage you to make an effort in dispelling such misconceptions. It is trite that the NSL enshrines important principles underpinning the rule of Law, such as the presumption of innocence, rule against double jeopardy, and fair trial guarantees. On the other hand, judges are appointed solely on the basis of their judicial and professional qualities, and, under our system of justice, are duty-bound to arrive at decisions according to Law. The NSL, which serves as the cornerstone of societal stability and well-being, protects the fundamental values of the rule of Law in Hong Kong. As graduates well-versed in the Law, do well to use your knowledge to educate those who do not have the benefit of your legal education.

The third piece of advice I would like to offer you is this: **Stay humble, and never stop learning.** As you know, the Law is in a constant state of flux. It does not exist in a vacuum, nor is it static. The very nature of the common law system means that legal principles, interpretations of written laws, and case precedents are developed incrementally over time. The Law is also constantly adapting itself to changes in society.

Do well to remember that learning is a life-long endeavor that extends well beyond your Law degrees. As you progress along the path of your legal careers, stay curious about the ever-evolving world around us. While you have gained significant legal knowledge throughout your studies, when it comes to learning, complacency is never an option. Above all, stay humble, and always be open to different points of view. Over time, your fervent pursuit of knowledge will pay its dividends in the form of new and improved skillsets, broadened horizons, and increased wisdom.

That brings me to the final piece of advice I wish to give you today: **Whatever you do, do it with passion.** Passion goes a long way in helping you achieve your goals. I have already alluded to the challenges that await you. At some point, you may well experience mistakes and setbacks as you go about your careers. It will not always be smooth sailing. At times of adversity, hold on to your passion and remember why you started. For it is passion for what you do that gives you the motivation, energy, and determination to overcome the hurdles in your way, however high and many they may be – and it is passion, together with hard work and commitment, that drives you to continually pursue excellence. Ultimately, it is passion that gives you purpose, meaning, and fulfillment in whatever career you choose to follow. Today, I am pleased to attend this meaningful occasion together with 3 prosecutors from my Department who are passionate about the work they do. You are most welcome to approach them at the Graduation Reception to know more about our work, and the experiences and insights they have gained from their careers.

It is often said that to whom much is given, much will be required. Each and every one of you is truly blessed to have received a first-class legal education. It is now incumbent on each of you to use that education wisely in serving the public good. Wherever your careers may take you, may you always be guided by the core virtues of integrity, justice, knowledge, and passion. Graduates, it is your time to take the stage. The future is not a gift, but something to be earned and achieved – and it all begins with you.

Thank you, and congratulations once again.