

217th Congregation for the Class of 2026
Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong

24 July 2026 (Friday)



Session ONE



Speech by Guest of Honour

Mr. Ricky Wong Kwong-Yiu, MH

Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Wheelock Properties Limited

Good morning, everyone — faculty, graduates, and families, friends, and loved ones in the audience.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the families and friends here today. To the parents and grandparents – your quiet sacrifices are the foundation beneath every certificate. To the friends and partners – your steady encouragement belongs to this achievement too.

And to the graduates, congratulations! What you have accomplished is real, and it deserves to be celebrated. Your degree was earned with love of a village. Today, take a moment to thank them. And one day, be that village for someone else.

Now, I'd like to take a quick moment to speak directly to the parents and families in the room in Cantonese, to thank them for everything they've done to bring the graduates to this day.

今日唔單止係對畢業生，對你哋嘅屋企人嚟講，同樣係一個好特別嘅日子。完成學業到今日畢業，除咗靠同學自己嘅努力，相信屋企人嘅背後嘅支持同信任，都非常重要。所以，今日呢個畢業禮，唔單止係慶祝各位同學學有所成，亦係肯定各位家長係背後嘅付出！我喺度以掌聲恭賀大家，您哋都值得俾啲掌聲自己！

Thank you for letting me share that special moment and returning to English now.

It is a real honour to be here with the HKU Faculty of Social Sciences. Graduates, you are leaving one of the greatest universities in the world, and you have chosen a field that matters deeply – because it helps us understand people, society, institutions and change. In a world that can feel noisy and divided, the way you have been trained to think is exactly the kind of foundation that can make a difference. Let me share with you three thoughts I wish I had heard when I was in your seat – agility, openness and kindness.

The first quality I want to talk about today is agility, and by that I don't mean moving fast. I mean the drive to move first, to break your own conventions, before a crisis decides your fate for you. In my career, I have seen the companies and people who survive adversity aren't necessarily the strongest or the smartest. Let me take you back to the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s. Hong Kong's property market had frozen solid. I still remember the first estate – Galaxia at Diamond Hill that I was responsible to sell. Out of 1,600 units, we sold only 200. Developers had entire sales teams sitting in sales office, waiting for customers to come. The industry response was unanimous: cut prices, wait, and hope for a miracle.

I asked a question that, at the time, sounded almost naïve, “Who is still talking to buyers every single day?” The answer was estate agents. They knew which families were still looking, which investors were hunting for a bargain. While our internal sales teams were isolated in the office, these agents were embedded in the community.

So I did something unconventional and talked to my senior Management. We became one of the first developers to seek out estate agents as partners — not as a last resort, but as our primary channel. We gave them commissions, access, trust. They sold homes we couldn't sell ourselves.

Looking back, the lesson was simple. In a crisis, don't cling to your existing structure. Ask, “Who is closest to the problem?” Go to them. Empower them. The solution is often already out there — you just haven't been humble enough to see it.

Your training has given you something most business people lack: the ability to see systems. You know a market isn't just supply and demand — it's human behaviour, social networks, power dynamics. When a crisis hits, you see patterns instead of chaos.

Agility, for you, won't just be about reacting fast. It is about asking better questions. In the crisis I faced, the question was simple, “Who is still talking to buyers?” The answer wasn't in any boardroom. It was out in the world, waiting to be seen.

So my advice is this: Be agile. Crisis will come — for your careers, for this city. When they do, don't wait for instructions. Observe, think, and build something new before the old thing is dead.

That leads to the second quality I want to share – openness.

Openness is not about agreeing with everyone. It is about being willing to learn from people who see the world differently. Sometimes openness means holding your own views lightly enough to let new evidence in. Sometimes it means seeking out voices you would not naturally encounter.

I learned that lesson deeply through public service. When I first joined the Central Policy Unit, a non official think tank, I was suddenly exposed to people from different sectors, social welfare, education, healthcare, government, and many others. That experience opened my eyes. I learned something important: when you step outside your own world, you have to listen differently.

In the corporate world, as senior management, I was used to talking while my colleagues listened, and people often came to me expecting answers. But in public service, I found myself facing unfamiliar social issues that others understood far better than I did. So I learned to listen first, to hear how they analysed things. Beyond that, I also learned how to communicate and engage with different stakeholders, to build alignment so that we could move forward together toward a shared direction.

That experience opened my eyes to something simple but hard. When you leave your own world, you have to learn to listen before you speak, to understand before you judge. Real openness isn't just curiosity — it's the discipline of seeking out the perspective you are least comfortable with. In my career, the moments that changed everything came from conversations I almost didn't have. Don't miss yours.

Now let me move on to kindness.

I would like to share a small story, because sometimes the smallest stories leave the biggest mark.

In 2012, I wanted to teach my son (10 years old) how to play tennis, so I went and got a coaching qualification. I also approached the principal of Fresh Fish Traders' School, 鮮魚行學校, my alma mater, and asked whether I could use my spare time to teach some students there. He arranged a group of Primary 4 and 5 students to play. It was just a few lessons, a few kids, and a court. Nothing grand. No stage lighting. No social media campaign. Just a simple act of trying to help. Years later, I was walking to a meeting at Central Government Offices when a young man came up to me, “Hello, Mr Wong. Do you recognise me? You taught me tennis when I was a child in school.” He was selling charity flags that day. I was in a hurry, so I did not get to speak with him properly. But when I got home, I found a photo from those days — me with the tennis. Through the principal, I managed to reconnect with him. His name was 舜傑.

What touched me most was not just that he remembered me. It was that he had grown into a young man who wanted to give back. He told me that because someone had helped him when he was young, he felt more confident, and now he wanted to help others too. That is the beautiful thing about kindness: it spreads.

One person helps another. That person helps someone else. And before long, you have built a chain of trust, confidence and service. That is how communities become stronger. Not only through policies and institutions, but through people who choose to pass on what they have received.

That story also shaped how I think about social enterprise.

I have served in public roles where I saw how important it is for business and society to work together. When I became Chairman and involved in the “Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme 伙伴倡自強社區協作計劃”, I saw first-hand that social enterprise is not just about doing good. It is about building something that can last. It should be able to earn, because earning gives it the chance to survive, grow, and help more people. And in today’s ESG era, businesses sectors can support social enterprises in practical ways that create real value.

At Wheelock Properties, we also try to put this belief into action. Our CSR and ESG work include community engagement, youth development, support for social enterprises and social housing. One example is Project WeCan, which began in 2011 and now helping 82 secondary schools with fewer resources and give students who are disadvantaged in learning more opportunities to explore their strengths and potential. Another is our social housing project, Lok Sin Village of over 1200 units at Tai Po, which supports families in urgent need. These are not just projects on a page. They reflect a simple idea: business should help society move forward and create long term value to the community.

Graduates, you may not all go on to become policymakers, researchers or civic leaders. But whatever path you choose, you can still make a difference. You can work in government, NGOs, business, education or technology. The title matters less than the intention behind it.

So let me leave you with this:

Be agile — when the old rules fail, be the first to write new ones.

Be open — the best answers often come from voices unlike your own.

And be kind — because in the end, the projects you build and the titles you earn will matter far less than the people you lifted along the way.

Congratulations to “Class of 2026” again, and I wish you all every success.



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Session TWO



Speech by Guest of Honour

Mr. Ray Chan

CEO of MemeStrategy and Co-Founder of 9GAG

Dear Students, Dean, Faculty Members, and Guests, I'm so happy to be back at HKU, and it's an honor to be here with you today.

Honestly, I have no idea why the Faculty of Social Sciences invited me to join the congregation. I didn't even attend my own graduation ceremony 20 years ago, when I barely scraped by to get my law degree at HKU. My first choice in JUPAS was actually Government and Laws. But the professors of this faculty were smart enough to reject me. They knew I'd be a terrible student and completely suck at my studies. So, thank you for finally letting me in!

Jokes aside, there are many reasons today is special. But the main reason I am so excited for all of you is this: Today is the first day of your life where you no longer need to check boxes. For the past two decades, your success has been defined by checking one box after another: Take these exams. Get into this school. Take these classes. Get this degree. Exams, schools, repeat. All of that ends today. From tomorrow onward, there is no longer a clear destination in life—other than the fact that we will all end up in the graveyard one day.

Today, some of you may have already found a job, but maybe that job will get replaced by AI soon. Some of you haven't found a job yet—but maybe you'll start a company, share memes and jokes for a living, and come back to HKU in 20 years to talk nonsense to the brightest students in town. I don't have a crystal ball, so I have no idea.

Since the Dean invited me, I've thought a lot about what makes this new phase of your life so different. I asked myself: What would I do if I could go back in time and start all over again? Up until today, getting here just required you to be reasonably smart and work reasonably hard. Hand in the homework, pass the exams, get the degree. But nobody tells you that after today, the game changes.

So I want to give you a cheat code—the one I wish someone had given me at graduation. Running 9GAG and working in social media for 18 years has taught me that most people lose interest and skip a video after the first 6 or 7 seconds. I know half of you have already slept, so my cheat code is short. It consists of three simple things: A Door, a Camera, and a Bed. This doesn't make any sense right now, but bear with me.

A Door

My wife and I have a 4-year-old son named Neo. One of the biggest differences between being an adult and being a child is the overwhelming volume of decisions we have to make. Adulthood is one decision leading to another. Therefore, to live a good life, we need to make good decisions. But how?

In 2015, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos shared a simple but powerful decision-making framework that completely changed how I operate. He said that every decision is like a door: Some are one-way doors—once we walk through, we can't walk back. These are decisions we cannot undo easily. Others are two-way doors—we walk through, look around, and if we don't like what's on the other side, we walk back and pick another door. These are reversible decisions.

A lot of people make a critical mistake: they treat every decision—even the small, reversible ones—with the same slow and heavyweight process meant for big life choices. That creates paralysis and kills speed because 95% of our decisions in life are two-way doors. The fix is simple: Move fast on two-way doors, and slow down only for the rare one-way doors.

For a two-way door decision, we don't need perfect data. Deciding with about 69% of the information is usually enough, because we can always correct it later. For a one-way door decision, take our time. Gather feedback, and consult people who have high believability—people who have actually "been there and done that"—because the cost of being wrong is high.

So, the next time we are paralyzed by a choice, ask ourselves: What kind of door is this? Can I reverse it?

A Camera

Good decisions matter, but no matter how smart we are or how hard we try, there are always things outside of our control. Life inevitably has its ups and downs.

Back in December 2018, my wife and I had our first son, Ian. He was born healthy, but when he was two weeks old, he suddenly became very sick. We rushed him to Matilda International Hospital, where he was born, but his condition was so severe that doctors immediately transferred him to Queen Mary Hospital for better life support. After a few days, he was finally diagnosed with Influenza A, but the doctors could not explain why his symptoms were so severe. Ian fought a good fight for almost three months, but he finished his race at just 99 days old.

Losing our newborn son was devastating. Those were the darkest days of our lives. For a long time, it felt like my wife and I could never be happy again. During the time Ian was in the hospital, we started going to church. Many coincidences (or miracles) eventually led us to become Christians—but that is a story for another day.

At a Bible dinner gathering, a speaker named Charles Yu shared a framework called "Zoom In, Zoom Out" that changed how I see life. We must zoom in when we are happy. When good things happen, zooming in helps us cherish the moment and practice gratitude. We need to actively celebrate our small victories and daily blessings—a delicious meal, a great movie, a laugh with a new friend. When we learn to focus our lens on these moments, we realize that life is genuinely good and the world is pretty awesome.

On the contrary, we must zoom out when we are sad. When tragedy or setback strikes, zooming out reminds us of the bigger picture. It reminds us that despite the pain and sadness, we are still surrounded by people who love and support us. We are not alone.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5 that we should rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance; endurance produces character; and character produces hope. When we zoom out, most setbacks become smaller. A degree with bad honors won't matter in three years.

For the record, I graduated with a Second Lower in my LLB; one of my co-founders was literally kicked out of CUHK. Fun fact: CUHK invited him back to give a career talk three years later! True story. Getting rejected a hundred times in job interviews doesn't matter once we find a job. A breakup with our high school sweetheart no longer hurts the moment we find our true love.

My wife and I still miss Ian every single day. But zooming out allows us to channel that grief into cherishing every single moment we now have with Neo. A change in perspective will not magically heal all our wounds, but it will equip us with the resilience to integrate our pain into who we are—turning misfortune into a fortune. Learn to zoom in and zoom out like a camera.

Gratitude is just a matter of adjusting the focus.

A Bed

Finally, let's talk about success. What is your definition of success? The typical Hong Kong success is pretty standard: How much money you make, how many cars you own, how many properties you bought, how many private club memberships you hold, or worse, how many girlfriends or boyfriends you have.

But on our deathbeds, none of it matters. When someone passes away, what is the final wish we give them? We say RIP: Rest in Peace. Why? Because being able to truly rest in peace is the ultimate human achievement, regardless of who we are, whether we are rich or poor, young or old.

In fact, my definition of success is also RIP. I'm not just talking about the end of our lives, but every single night when we go to bed. We spend about eight hours a day in bed—roughly one-third of our entire lives. If we can lay our heads on our pillow peacefully, without being consumed by worry, anxiety, jealousy, or anger, we are winning a third of our time on earth.

Not to mention, a good rest gives us the energy to actually chase our dreams the next morning. Multiple studies have shown that good sleep can ease—or even resolve—many mental and emotional struggles. Keep a consistent schedule. Keep our room cool, dark, and quiet. Avoid heavy arguments or serious decisions after 10 pm. Simple habits, real impact.

Conclusion

There is an old saying: "Life is a journey between B (Birth) and D (Death). What lies in the middle is C (Choices)."

Today, on your official graduation—your first day in the unscripted real world—I hope my cheat code of B-C-D (the Bed, the Camera, and the Door) helps you navigate what's next. May it give you a new definition of success, a new lens on life, and a sharper framework for your next decision.

I lived in Ricci Hall throughout my three years at HKU. Our hall motto is a Latin phrase: "Quantum potes tantum aude", which translates to: "As much as you are able, that you should dare to do." I wish you all the courage, resilience, and blessings for the incredible adventure ahead. Onwards and upwards!

Thank you.



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Session THREE



Speech by Guest of Honour

Ms. Winnie Ng, JP

Director of The Kowloon Motor Bus Company Limited

Bridging Innovation and Humanity: The Power of the Social Sciences in Action

Dean Wen, distinguished guests, members of faculty, proud parents, and the magnificent Graduating Class of 2026. Good afternoon.

It is an immense honour to stand before you today. Graduation is a truly unique milestone. It is a day to look back with pride at all your hard work and accomplishments, but it is also an exciting moment to look forward to the promise of what your future holds.

Parents, today is a tribute to your unwavering love and support over the years. Graduates, today belongs entirely to you. You made it.

When the Faculty invited me to speak, I reflected deeply on what I could share that would be truly useful to a Social Sciences graduate. My own journey has been unconventional. I did not take a straight path. I spent the first phase of my career in the fast-paced, high-stakes world of corporate business. Only after achieving success there did I make a major shift and head to the School of Government at Harvard University to study public policy and administration.

Today, I want to share with you what that change of direction taught me about the world you are about to inherit, and why your degree is more valuable right now than it has ever been.

The Corporate Arena: Innovation with Purpose

When I finished my MBA at the University of Chicago, I entered the business world driven entirely by strategy, market efficiency, and growth. At that time, public transportation was seen purely as a basic utility—simply moving a person from point A to point B.

But I looked at our buses and saw an untapped social space. I realized we could completely transform the passenger experience and city landscape by introducing on-board multimedia screens and creative bus body advertising, essentially turning a routine commute into an engaging journey. This idea became a massive commercial success that led directly to a public listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

Yet, as the business grew, my perspective began to shift. A bus is not just a steel frame on wheels; it is a moving community where lives intersect. Every single day, our operations interact with millions of real people—working-class citizens rushing to the office, students studying for exams on their commute, and senior citizens heading to medical appointments. I realized that the true metric of our success was not just the financial balance sheet. It was how smoothly and compassionately we integrated into the daily fabric of Hong Kong life.

That people-first mindset is why our work at the bus company has continued to evolve. We look at a bus route today and do not just see numbers; we see human and community needs. It is why we launched our App 1933, using digital innovation to provide real-time arrival details and make daily commuting stress-free for millions. It is why we launched our "Pet Bus" initiative to build a more inclusive, animal-friendly city for younger generations and pet owners. It is why we introduced the "Happy Elderly Ride" initiative across our major termini—equipping bus stations with cooling fans, seating, and specialized training for our drivers to ensure our senior citizens travel comfortably and safely in the summer heat.

Business teaches you how to build engines of efficiency. But it does not always teach you where those engines should drive. I began to realize that true leadership requires something more than market metrics. It requires a deep understanding of human systems, community needs, and social equity.

From the Boardroom to Harvard: Broadening the Vision

This realization led to a major turning point. I chose to step away from the day-to-day corporate executive track and entered Harvard University as a Mason Fellow to pursue a Master of Public Administration.

Going from the corporate boardroom back to the university classroom was a humbling experience. In business, you make quick, top-down decisions to maximize growth and profit. But in public policy and social science, you learn that society is beautifully, frustratingly complex. You realize that real-world problems—like poverty, healthcare disparities, community welfare, and social gaps—cannot be solved with a simple corporate spreadsheet alone.

Harvard completely refined my vision. It taught me that economic tools and engines are incredibly powerful, but they must be governed by a deep civic conscience. It taught me that policy is not just about writing rules; it is about protecting human dignity and uplifting lives.

The Social Sciences in Action: Serving Hong Kong

Equipped with this framework and new mindset, I returned to Hong Kong determined to bridge these two worlds. For the past two decades, I have divided my time between corporate boards and public governance.

When I served as the Chairman of the Prince of Wales Hospital, or on the Hospital Authority, I brought my corporate background in procurement, facilities management, operations, and efficiency. But it was my public administration training that kept me focused on the core mission: making sure that a sick patient, regardless of their wealth and background, receives world-class, compassionate care.

When I served on the Women's Commission, working on the Women Empowerment Fund, the focus was not on individual success, but on uplifting our entire community together. It was truly about human development and creating real pathways for women to thrive in our city.

And this is exactly why Hong Kong needs you, the Class of 2026.

Look around us. The challenges our society faces right now cannot be solved by technology or capital alone. Artificial intelligence can write incredible code, but it cannot feel empathy. Financial markets can trade billions in seconds, but they cannot build a cohesive community.

As graduates of the Social Sciences, you possess the specific vocabulary and the toolkit needed to solve human problems. You understand psychology, sociology, policy, and institutional behaviour. You are the translators who can take economic power or technological innovations and channel them into actual public good.

Three Simple Lessons

As you step out of this hall today, I want to leave you with three simple pieces of advice that have guided me:

First, build bridges. If your career takes you into the private corporate world, bring your social science conscience with you. Remind your colleagues that businesses thrive because of society, not in a vacuum. If you choose to go into public service or NGOs, bring a sharp, professional, and data-driven mindset with you to maximize your impact.

Second, ride the wave. The world is shifting faster than ever, and your career will rarely follow a straight line. Do not be afraid to take risks when new doors open. Trust your social sciences training to help you adapt, look deeper, and find human solutions in times of uncertainty.

And third, give back to your community. The education, status, and opportunities you hold today are powerful gifts. True leaders do not collect success just for themselves. Your ultimate goal should be to use your achievements to give back and uplift the community around you.

Graduates, your caps and gowns are a beautiful symbol of what you have achieved so far. But tomorrow, the real adventure begins.

Do not let the scale of the world's problems overwhelm you. You can make an impact—one policy, one community project, one ethical business decision at a time. Your families, your professors, and this city are looking to you to build a more inclusive, resilient, and compassionate Hong Kong.

Go out there, use your knowledge to innovate and connect, use your platform to serve, and always keep humanity at the centre of everything you do.

Congratulations, Class of 2026! Thank you so much.

