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ACCOLADE FOR UNIVERSITY'S COMPUTER EXPERT

Prof. Wong Chak Kuen -- an internationally-renowned researcher newly appointed as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Computer Science of the Chinese University of Hong Kong -- has become the first and only person from Hong Kong to be named Fellow of the prestigious Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). In 1985, Professor Wong was already elected Fellow of IEEE, another prestigious international professional society of electrical and electronics engineers.

Well-known for his work on algorithms -- which form the basis of computer applications -- Prof. Wong had held key research positions with IBM for 25 years before joining the University two months ago.

He and his colleague, Professor Andrew C. Yao from Princeton University, are the only two Chinese among the 54 people in the computer field honoured this year by the ACM.

"ACM Fellows have made critical contributions towards and continue to exhibit extraordinary leadership in the development of the Information Age," the Association announced, adding that these are the people to whom the ACM and its members look for guidance and leadership.

Prof. Wong graduated with First Class Honours from the University of Hong Kong in 1965 with a BA degree in Mathematics. He furthered his studies at Columbia University, and received an MA and a Ph.D. degree in Mathematics before joining IBM as a Research Staff Member at the T.J. Watson Research Center. He had received numerous awards from IBM for his outstanding research achievements, and had been manager of the VLSI Design Algorithms Unit and Advanced Design Automation Lab.

His returning to the territory to join the fast-growing department at the Chinese University is seen as a major "brain gain" and boost for computer science education and research in Hong Kong.

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Prof. Wong's mission, as he put it, is to help the territory build a strong hub of computer science to influence China and the rest of the Asian region.

The research thrust, he said, will be to develop "intelligent bilingual multi-media information processing systems" which are useful not only for Hong Kong, but also for the rest of the world.

The Hanzix project to develop an open system to support Chinese computing for different input/output methods; and the multi-media Chinese dictionary project are examples of the department's research efforts in this area.

Prof. Wong also has plans to facilitate more extensive and efficient use of the Internet resources by putting on line more information, which are of interest to the commercial and industrial sectors.

In response to community needs, his department will offer a new one-year full-time M.Sc. programme in Computer Science in 1995/96, in addition to the existing M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes.

"Technology is changing very, very fast. Thirty years ago, we were only using slide rules. Now we are talking about palm-top computers, and even nano-computers, which are very tiny machines and can be injected into your body to do surgery," said Prof. Wong.

"With the information superhighway extending its influence everywhere, and the trend of miniaturization continuing unabated, this technological revolution is likely to hit more and more people,

"Computer knowledge is going to be as fundamental as language acquisition. You are either in the revolution or you'll be out of it. This applies not only to scientists or researchers, but also businessmen and people from all walks of life," he said.

Asked for his advice to incumbent or would-be computer majors, Prof Wong said, "You don't need to be a genius, but you do need to work very hard. Opportunities are abundant but so are the challenges to change with the tide."

As for his own children, Prof. Wong started their computer exposure at the age of seven, but he said he would leave their future careers to their self-determination.

Note to Editors: Photo of Prof. Wong available for pick up at Government Information Services. Press enquiries: Mrs. Shirley Kwok at 1168-822 A/C 6633 or 2609-8897.