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CU'S ENGINEERING FACULTY TAKES ON REGIONAL ROLE

The Chinese University of Hong Kong's Faculty of Engineering is to increase student intake by 10% to 1,300 by 1995, and set up a new Department of Mechanical Engineering next year to meet the growing need for engineers in Hong Kong as well as southern China.

Speaking at a press briefing today, the Faculty Dean, Prof. Omar Wing, said their development plan had to take into account not only the manpower requirement of Hong Kong, but also that of the whole southern China region.

"We are taking a broader view in the long run," he explained. "Think about the fast-growing economy of Guangdong for instance. There is a population of 60 million but only two major universities, namely the Zhongshan University and South China University of Technology.

"I believe we have a greater regional role to play in higher education in the high technology areas in the years to come," said Prof. Wing.

The Chinese University has been offering programmes in electronics and computer science since the 60's and 70's respectively. The information engineering programme -- the first of its kind in Hong Kong -- was launched in 1988. And the Faculty of Engineering came into being in 1991 with the addition of the fourth specialization -- Hong Kong's first systems engineering programme.

All departments of the Faculty have recently been grouped under one roof at the new, 10-storey Ho Sin-hang Engineering Building which comes with some of the most advanced research laboratories in telecommunications, electronics and computer science in Southeast Asia.

Since its inception, the Faculty has started co-operation with universities in China at various levels according to Prof. Wing. A number of collaborative research projects have been launched. One of the most significant being the HANZIX project with the Software Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences as well as the Institute for Information Industry of Taiwan. The project aims to develop an open system on UNIX, which will support Chinese computing irrespective of how the characters are represented at the input and output.

There are also frequent faculty and student exchanges. Post-graduate students from the mainland studying at the Faculty now number 16, out of a total of 160.

On the teaching and research emphasis of the Faculty, Prof. Wing said information technology had been a major focus. Each of the four constituent departments supports the development of information technology in a different way.

"Hong Kong has become a regional centre for services including telecommunications, finance, banking, trading, shipping, insurance, TV entertainment and the like," he said.

"With information being the principal commodity, the daily engagement of these industries is the generation, processing, transmission, interpretation, and presentation of information.

"Information technology will be the key industry for Hong Kong in future and there are exciting opportunities and rewarding careers for young people joining this field.

"The expanding use of computer to process and transmit multilingual information in all forms --- voice, data, image, video, over a broad-band telecommunications network linked to all parts of the world -- will be the driving force behind this industry. Our education mission should, therefore, be directed to support it," said Prof. Wing.

A recently-completed survey of the career destinations of the first batch of 53 graduates (of 1992) specialising in information engineering showed that all of them were employed within three months of graduation. Much sought-after by major employers, the graduates took up jobs mainly in the computing (40%), telecommunications (17.5%), government (10%), and marketing and management (10%) fields, and the rest in teaching or further studies.

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