

Forum urges universities to evolve

Experts say increased technology means institutions need to adapt to a more comprehensive style, **Chen Meiling** reports.



From top: Some of the speakers at the recent University Presidents Forum held at the Central University of Finance and Economics, including He Xiuchao, Party chief of the university; Zhuo Zhi, president of Southwestern University of Finance and Economics; Lu Fucai, president of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics; and Peter Dawkins, vice-chancellor of Victoria University in Australia.

The internet and new technology mean that universities have to evolve in disciplinary reform and teaching methods to confront opportunities and challenges, according to a recent forum held at the Central University of Finance and Economics in Beijing.

Higher education is the prime driving force for technological and innovative development, the major source for talent and an important element to evaluate the development and future potential of a country, said He Xiuchao, Party chief of the Central University of Finance and Economics, at the forum on Oct 18.

China's share in the global economy has increased many times over the past decades — from only 1.8 percent at the start of the reform and opening-up in 1978, to 15.2 percent today as China has become the world's second-largest economy.

Higher education played a major role in the process, according to He. China had about 2,600 universities with more than 38.33 million students in 2018. The gross enrollment rate in higher education reached 48 percent, exceeding the average level of the key index of medium-high income countries, he says. The GER index measures the scale and quality of a country's higher education, and is also an indicator of its social development and progress.

Wang Yaoqi, president of the university, says as demand grows, the spreading of knowledge speeds up. This is fueled by big data and all-media networks, and the new technologies, especially those involved in internet, see a doubling in capacity every two years or so. This is not always easily comprehensible to every student and teacher.

In such cases, Wang says, the development mode of disciplines initiated by the university also undergoes dramatic changes from simple theoretical evolution to interdisciplinary study, teaching more practical approaches for students to better address and solve real-life problems. Meanwhile, current universities help students to obtain a greater understanding of humanity, morality and social benefit, according to Wang.

For example, economics may need to combine psychology, sociology, geography, and even biology and medicine. The reduction of poverty, for instance, involves knowing about medical care, resource allocation, as well as the study of costs, efficiency and management, she adds.

"Today's disciplinary develop-



Students take selfies on the decorated campus of the Central University of Finance and Economics as it celebrates the 70th anniversary of its founding in Beijing. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY



More than 200 scholars and officials from about 30 universities around the world attend a recent University Presidents Forum organized by the Central University of Finance and Economics in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ment is more open and dynamic," says the CUFU president. "Previously, we trained people to enable them to specialize in a certain field, but now we need talented people who boast comprehensive capabilities and have acquired more skills besides their specialty."

Wang and He delivered speeches at the University Presidents Forum held by the CUFU, where more than 200 experts from about 30 universities worldwide shared their insights under the theme of "responsibility and mission for universities in social changes". The forum was one

of the events marking the 70th anniversary of the university this year.

Zhuo Zhi, president of Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, who also attended the forum, agrees that Chinese higher education, especially in finance, should evolve to confront the uncertainties in the innovation-driven era.

The applications for internet and artificial intelligence have drastically changed the traditional finance sector, which propelled universities to rethink the knowledge system that higher institutions provided to

their students, he says.

Besides, as China is carrying out projects related to the Belt and Road Initiative, and the development of Xiongan New Area, the Yangtze River Delta region and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, universities need to adapt to meeting the new demands for related human resources and professions, to better contribute to the development of the country and the world, Zhuo adds.

Lu Fucai, president of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics, said at a session held under the main forum on Oct 18 that the market demand for finance talent has changed remarkably. "When AI replaces the basic function of accounting, can human accountants still find a job? When AI sees through the demands of customers in advance, what else can our marketing team do?"

"During the age of AI, we need to think what occupations our students can take and what skills they should gain to help them to obtain a good job after graduation, so we need to timely upgrade our traditional management and finance sectors to satisfy the students' craving for new technological skills and advanced know-how."

Lu's university has opened a financial technology major to teach students to apply fintech in data



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Wang Yaoqi, president of the Central University of Finance and Economics

security, anti-money-laundering and combating illegal capital flow. The university also introduces knowledge about big data for management and accounting majors, according to Lu.

Peter Dawkins, vice-chancellor of Victoria University in Australia, who attended the forum, says the university also conducted significant reform to cultivate talent for the 21st century. For instance, instead of opening the courses all together, the students now study one subject each time, focusing on it for four weeks before taking a new one. Each class has only 30 students, who have access to advanced online learning resources, Dawkins says.

The aim of the university is to boost one-on-one conversations between teachers and students, encourage students to be confident and independent and acquire the major skills needed in the modern era, such as problem-solving and entrepreneurship, he adds.

The CUFU was given the mission to train professionals in taxation when the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. It's now known as "the cradle of financial talent" in the field of finance and management, with more than 140,000 graduates serving the country's finance system and other sectors. Applied economics and accounting are its national-level key disciplines.

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Kung fu master wings his way to success

By **WANG KAIHAO**
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When Duncan Leung Shiu-hung takes to the stage to deliver a speech in Beijing to share his decades of experience promoting Wing Chun, a southern Chinese form of kung fu, the man from Hong Kong says: "I'm a practitioner of martial arts, not someone good at talking."

As a keynote speaker invited by streaming platform Tencent to a recent forum on the contemporary significance of kung fu, Leung has a resume that would make the younger generations envious. As a childhood friend of Bruce Lee, Leung, at age 13, was introduced to Ip Man, the Wing Chun master. That meeting followed years of intense training and Ip taught him to realize the importance of adopting kung fu as a practical skill, rather than as a means to show off.

"Ip told me: 'If you cannot use kung fu in battle, why bother learning it?'" says Leung, now 77. "During social upheaval, kung fu can help us protect ourselves. But in the current era of peace and stability, we can use kung fu to build up our strength. It was never meant to be 'performed' in the first place."

Nevertheless, thanks to Lee's films, kung fu gained a global following during the 1960s. For most Americans, kung fu remained a



Wing Chun master Duncan Leung Shiu-hung speaks at a recent forum on kung fu in Beijing.

mystery, and they had no idea where to learn it.

Leung, who moved to New York in the early 1970s, then decided to open a martial arts school in the city, which was soon crowded with visitors.

"People kept coming to the school because they wanted to learn more about Bruce Lee, and not because they were attracted to Wing Chun per se," he says with a smile.

Still, Leung considered cross-cultural communication as essential to spreading a deeper understanding of kung fu, rather than relying on the way it was depicted on the screen.

"Martial arts are a key cultural root for us Chinese," he says. "It's

also an important intangible property in Chinese culture. We have to preserve it and ensure it's recognized around the world.

"Popularizing kung fu in other countries can't be done by one person only; every martial artist needs to contribute."

Sometimes it needs an opportunity to arise, just like they do in Bruce Lee's movies. Leung's opportunity finally arrived when a scuffle broke out in a restaurant where he was dining. He narrowly missed being shot twice, yet quelled the tense situation with his bare hands in front of two police officers. News of this encounter swept New York like wildfire. He was even invited to train police officers in the art of Wing Chun. The course later expanded to special force units of the US Navy, and earned him great acclaim.

Nevertheless, cultural differences were still common. Leung recalls that while his Chinese apprentices would never question their masters according to Chinese tradition, many of their US counterparts would do so regularly.

"I was often asked 'Why?' when I taught the Americans. They wanted to satisfy their curiosity before they agreed with what I was saying," Leung says.

In recent years, Leung has frequently returned to China to launch Wing Chun courses in the provinces

of Fujian and Guangdong. There he found that the traditional master-apprentice relationship had also changed, and many young Chinese who come to learn martial arts now tend to ask questions, too.

Leung shared his decades of experience in his 2018 book, *60 Years of Wing Chun*, which got a rating of 9.3 out of 10 on review site Douban for its relevance to younger practitioners.

And the guru who once used to shun the movie limelight has changed tack and embraced the idea for the sake of spreading the message about Wing Chun in his homeland.

During the shoot for *The Grandmaster*, the 2013 biopic about Ip Man, he recruited Tony Leung Chiu-wai, the Hong Kong film star, as his student.

"I didn't expect him to take it so seriously," Duncan Leung says. "However, he really did, and the film turned out to be a success."

But he did not agree with everything in the production.

"In real Wing Chun, you don't have as complicated movements as you see in the movie," he says. "But the audience is king — so what choice do we have?"

The Grandmaster is considered to be one of the best kung fu films in recent years. It scored 7.9 points out of 10 on Douban, and was widely acclaimed by many moviegoers.

Duncan Leung's another well-



During the forum that hails Chinese martial arts, two of Duncan Leung Shiu-hung's disciples display the techniques of Wing Chun. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

known student is Xu Haofeng, the Beijing film director known for his kung fu in art-house style, like *The Master* (2015).

"I learned a lot from Leung, who in turn learned it from Ip Man," Xu says. "If you really go deeper in kung fu, you will find it is essentially about morals and rituals, not violence. It can also hone a person's patience and wisdom."

To Xu's delight, his master agreed to be the martial arts consultant of his next movie, where he persuaded Duncan Leung to appear in a cameo.

Speaking at the forum, celebrated martial-arts blogger Wang Xiaolei, says: "In China, martial arts are connected with chivalry and justice, and also has cultural connotations with patriotism.

"However, kung fu is also often portrayed as something purely metaphysical and spiritual."

"I could feel Leung Shiu-hung's confidence as I watched his movements," says the online critic who also goes by the pseudonym of Liushen Leilei. "He taught people today to stand on solid ground."

Xiong Liang, a cartoonist for children's books, also shares his experiences of practicing martial arts while attending the forum.

"After learning kung fu, one may become more responsible about his or her work. Young people won't keep complaining and may think through their own problems," he says. "It will also help them to be more open-minded in interpersonal relationships."