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Speech at the Legislative Council

Chairman Ho, Members of the Legislative Council,

I am speaking on behalf of the University of Hong Kong Staff Association (HKUSA). My points are as follows:

- 1) Regarding the Member's Bill concerning the University of Hong Kong, HKUSA supports the two amendments proposed in the bill.
- 2) Prior to the meeting, the staff organizations had opportunities to communicate with the management, and they understand the background to and intentions of the changes. They had also obtained further relevant information.
- 3) Regarding the role descriptions of the Court and the Council, HKUSA does not consider it necessary to change their Chinese and English names. We have no other opinion on the University further elaborating their roles, stating that they only reflect the facts. However, subsequent to the Niland Report, staff representatives on the Council have in recent years been appointed in the form of "Trusteeship" through University-wide elections. This is quite different from the practice of other universities which appoint "Staff Organization Representatives" to their Councils. As a result there are no official representatives of staff organizations on the Council at present. We think that such a practice needs to be reviewed. It can hardly be justified that with a membership of over 2,000, HKUSA does not have an official representative on the Council. We hold that there should at least be official representatives of staff organizations on the Council's Human Resources Policy Committee.
- 4) On the other proposed change regarding academic titles – during Phase I of the University's HRM Reform in 2004, not a few colleagues already requested changing the title "Lecturer" to "Assistant Professor" or "Associate Professor". HKUSA has supported the renaming proposal, but has repeatedly emphasized that it should be implemented with no detrimental effect on the 13 colleagues retaining the old title, who should continue to enjoy "good cause" protection, every one of them. We know that the University plans to let 283 teaching related colleagues to opt for the title "Lecturer" and for recruitment purpose in future. Given that nearly 300 staff members will benefit from it, we support the change.

The final point. In recent meetings with the Council Chairmen of the 8 universities (HKU, CUHK, UST, PolyU, BapTU, OU, LU and CityU), the Federation of Hong Kong Higher Education Staff Associations proposed setting up an Independent Ombudsman – a body formed by people from various sides, with a function to look into cases thoroughly, and its investigations and decisions authoritative enough for the reference of the universities' management. Consideration should also be given to having staff organization representatives and external independents as its members.

Your consideration of the points above would be much appreciated.

Stephen Chan
 President
 The University of Hong Kong Staff Association
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