

Persistence is the Key to Success -- The decade-long struggle behind Vet School

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It's been a bumpy ride but Hong Kong's first-ever dedicated college for veterinary medicine is up and running at City University of Hong Kong (CityU).

When I proposed a veterinary medicine school for the One Health concept in 2008 shortly after taking over as president of CityU, the response from our leadership team was positive, but convincing others was a tough sell.

Persuading the government, funding agencies, stakeholders, the media and the general public was like running a marathon. However, our perseverance paid off. Today CityU celebrated the naming ceremony for our Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences; and we witnessed the ground-breaking ceremony for The Jockey Club One Health Tower.

Not only that, Chief Executive Carrie Lam, by supporting veterinary education, has shown great vision in promoting scientific and technological innovation; Jockey Club Chairman Simon Ip was at the forefront of the HK\$500 million donation from the Club to CityU; and Hong Kong citizens have been in support of the project, according to many surveys.

No doubt the team spirit within the CityU management, and support from CityU Council, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and internal and external advisors were vital. We are also indebted to our 10-year partner, Cornell University, one of the world's leading institutions in veterinary medicine.

Three points are worth stressing.

Firstly, our health is intrinsically interconnected to the health of animals and the environment at the local and global levels. The One Health concept in our 6-year Veterinary Medicine bachelor curriculum transforms how people look at health and sustainable development today.

Secondly, our veterinary education is exemplary in integrating teaching and research to enhance the quality of student learning. Our researchers teach and our teachers research!

Thirdly, we have added “soulware” to the hardware and software foundation of university education. Soulware means eschewing empty talk, and taking actions to improve the living environment. We need to inculcate our students with a sense of belonging, dedication and aspiration in addition to emphasizing state-of-the-art facilities and interacting with world-leading scholars.

CityU now has the full support of Hong Kong, including that of the UGC announced today, and together we can get to work on preparing world-class professionals for veterinary medicine to fully realize the One Health mission.