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HKUST Council Chair Prof. Harry SHUM's speech at Prof. Chia-Wei WOO's memorial service (English version only)

Family members of Professor Woo, Council and Court Members, Esteemed Guests, Colleagues, Students, and Friends of HKUST:

Today, we gather not merely to bid farewell, but to celebrate an extraordinary life—a life that shaped the very soul of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Professor Chia-Wei Woo was more than a visionary leader and revered scholar; he was an architect of excellence whose legacy will forever illuminate our pursuit of greatness.

Professor Woo's life was a masterclass in transcending limits. His early academic brilliance laid the foundation for a career that redefined higher education. When he joined HKUST's Planning Committee in 1986, he approached the task with the ethos of **“creating, not replicating”**—a philosophy that became the University's DNA:

He recruited world-class scholars, forging interdisciplinary alliances that ignited intellectual dynamism.

He designed bold academic programs where creativity thrived alongside rigor.

He oversaw the creation of a campus blending modern architecture with the poetry of mountains and sea, embedding Eastern philosophy into its very foundations.

He cultivated partnerships with governments, industries, and global universities, ensuring HKUST emerged as a beacon of international collaboration.

Professor Woo understood that great universities must serve as bridges between civilizations. As President, he brought luminaries like Bill Gates to HKUST's Clear Water Bay campus, allowing students to engage directly with pioneers shaping our era. His prescient 1990s proposal for a “Hong Kong Bay Area” evolved into today's Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area—a testament to his belief that true excellence lies in knowledge transcending borders and uplifting humanity.

I will never forget the spring day in 2000 when Professor Woo handed me my appointment letter as Adjunct Associate Professor of Computer Science and Engineering of HKUST — a moment etched in our collective memory. From Founding President to President Emeritus and Senior Advisor, he remained HKUST's guiding light, embodying the spirit of a lifelong

educator. Even last November, he came to the luncheon and fireside chat with our new honorary doctorate Jensen Huang, proving his unwavering dedication to nurturing talent.

As Council Chairman, I walk daily through the living legacy Professor Woo crafted: the hum of innovation in lecture halls, the relentless quest for truth in laboratories, the global networks humming with ideas—all bear his indelible imprint. His declaration resonates eternally: **“HKUST belongs to Hong Kong, to our nation, and to the world.”** Today, as our graduates courageously tackle challenges from the Greater Bay Area to the global stage, they embody the ultimate tribute to his vision.

To Professor Woo’s beloved family: on behalf of the HKUST community, we extend our deepest condolences. You shared with the world not just an extraordinary educator, but a man who lived his ideals. His spirit will forever stand vigil on the shores of Clear Water Bay, guiding generations of seekers toward **“stars and truth.”**

Thank you, Professor Woo, for teaching us that **excellence is not a destination, but a journey.** Your torch now passes to our hands.