

Cradle of whole person education in Hong Kong: 1956-1970



In 1956, Hong Kong Baptist College was founded by the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong as a small private post-secondary college. Funded solely through tuition fees and donations, the College faced severe hardship in its first decade, yet its founders remained steadfast in their vision and went against the odds to fulfill their dream of providing education that nurtures the whole person.

Amidst the joy of the celebrations for Hong Kong Baptist University's Diamond Jubilee in 2016, it is well worth looking back to remember the modest circumstances in which this cherished institution came into being. It was on 5 March 1956 when Hong Kong Baptist College (HKBC), as it was then called, started life, established as a private post-secondary college. Indeed, so modest was the newly minted College that in its early years it shared classrooms and other core facilities with a middle school.

Soon after, with the dedication, persistence and determination of its founders – hallmark qualities for which Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) has become renowned – the College progressed, initially at a relatively sedate pace but then with increasing momentum.



The Hong Kong Baptist College emblem



Hong Kong Baptist College shares the campus of the Pui Ching Middle School from 1956 to 1966

The following landmark dates give just the bare bones of HKBU's dynamic development: in March 1970 the College was registered as an Approved Post Secondary College under the *Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance* (1964); in 1983 – a particularly key year – the College became a government-funded higher education institution after gaining successful accreditation by the UK Council for National Academic Awards in 1981; eventually, on 16 November 1994 and after less than four decades since its lowly birth, Hong Kong Baptist University came into existence.

According to Chinese tradition, the 60th anniversary that HKBU is marking in 2016 represents the completion of a full cycle. At the same time it denotes the dawn of a new age. It's a time when it is appropriate not only to reflect on past milestones and achievements but also to look forward with eagerness and hope to a forthcoming era filled with infinite promise and opportunities.



Students perform Chinese opera *Xi Shi* in 1959 to raise funds for the building of the permanent campus



The library of the College

The University is justly proud to be able to stand tall at this landmark in its arduous but trail-blazing development with full confidence that the progressive evolution and refinement over the past six decades of its distinctive brand of whole person education, coupled with steadfast adherence to the motto “Faith and Perseverance”, will stand HKBU in good stead for what lies ahead.



Students demonstrate their musical talent in a Founders' Day event



Staff and students at the Class of 1961 Graduation Banquet

The Certificate of Registration of Hong Kong Baptist College under the Education Ordinance

The bedrock foundation, which serves as a constantly reassuring guideline for future development, is enshrined in HKBU's Mission and Vision. The Mission declares that HKBU is profoundly committed to academic excellence in teaching, research and service and is at the same time dedicated to the development of the whole person in all its endeavours, built upon the heritage of Christian higher education.

HKBU aspires to be a premier institution of higher learning which provides a broad-based education that inspires creativity while making a distinctive contribution to the advancement of knowledge through research and scholarship.

Humble yet ambitious beginnings

The world may be ever changing but at HKBU a consistency in outlook and policies has been clearly apparent since the institution's earliest days and survives to this day. HKBU, located in the heart of a highly multicultural city, has stressed since the era of its founder and first president Dr Lam Chi-fung the vital importance of East-West integration. His strongly held view was that Hong Kong people should learn about local culture, but then use that knowledge in order to fully understand and appreciate foreign cultures. Even the University's anthem clearly suggests HKBU as being a meeting point between East and West: "O Southern Sea, O Lion Hill, home of our College hall, where East and West unite their best, for greater good of all."

A second constant theme of the College and then the University was expounded by the second president, Dr Daniel Tse Chi-wai. He championed HKBU as the standard bearer of "Light and Truth". He stressed the need for courage and unwavering advancement as crucial qualities in the face of the hardships that would inevitably arise. As a result, HKBU is a byword for perseverance, proudly delivering a brand of whole person education that nurtures future leaders who not only possess perseverance but are also confident, caring, righteous and responsible.



Dr Lam Chi-fung, the founding President



Dr Daniel Tse, the second President, briefs students about the future plans of the College

Against all odds: the first 10 years

The birth of HKBU coincided with the rebuilding of broken societies, not only in Hong Kong but globally, just 11 years after the Second World War had ended. While there was still much hardship and suffering to endure, it was also a time that was ripe with opportunities, particularly in education. Primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong saw a gradual increase in student numbers. At a period when The University of Hong Kong was the only public institution of tertiary education, private post-secondary colleges sprang up one after another.



The Baptist Convention of Hong Kong resolves in its annual meeting held in 1955 to establish Hong Kong Baptist College

A breakthrough opportunity presented itself in 1955 when the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong decided to establish Hong Kong Baptist College. The following year the Board of Governors was founded with Dr Wong Yue-kwong acting as chairman, Dr Lam Chi-fung as president and Maurice J Anderson as vice-president.

In establishing priorities for the College, Dr Lam pressed ahead with realising his vision of integrating East-West cultures, transmitting local culture to the rest of the world and holding student-organised conferences to import and learn about overseas values. He believed strongly that through this two-way communication of cultures, learning becomes an important tool for social development. Such cultural cross-fertilisation also accommodates both the spirit of a modern Chinese Christian institution of higher education and the down-to-earth practical needs of Hong Kong.



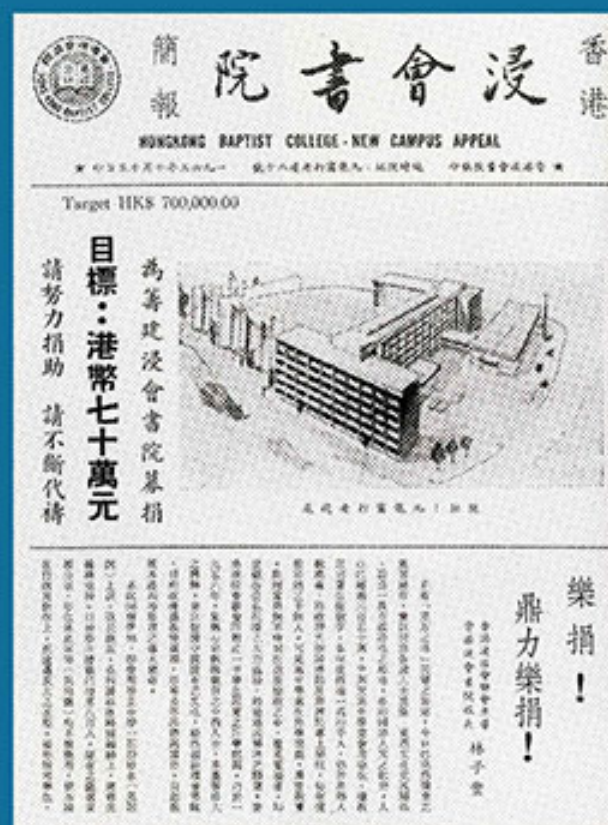
A religious gathering held at the College

Challenges and obstacles were nothing new to Hong Kong Baptist College in its early years. It was forced to weather a series of crises as it pressed ahead with its pursuit of ceaseless advancement. In the 1960s, the College was mainly self-supporting, with more than 80 percent of total income derived from tuition fees. In 1968 and 1969, the College experienced a financial slump, leading to a controversial decision to increase tuition fees in 1969 and 1970. In a reaction to this move, more than 600 out of the College's 3,000 students held a peaceful demonstration on campus, calling on the College to reverse its decision and to seek sources of external funding. Notable among the various arguments that were aired during the crisis

were expressions of sympathy for the students' cause. At the same time President Lam made innumerable bids to attract outside donations and other means of fiscal support.

Academic development in the 1960s

In September 1956, four-year diploma programmes were offered by a total of six academic departments: Chinese Language, English Language, Sociology, Mathematics and Science, Civil Engineering and Business Administration. In 1960, the College expanded its curriculum with the addition of Geography and History majors. In 1961, Baptist College was restructured into two independent faculties: the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science.



The College appeals for donations to support the construction of the permanent campus



The first cohort of 153 students of the College in 1956

Within a year of its foundation, enrolments at the College witnessed encouraging increases. In 1956, there were 153 students. This number of freshmen gradually climbed to 214 in 1957 and 282 in 1958 before moderating in 1959 to 225. The first batch of graduates in 1960 numbered 66 students, of whom 15 advanced to careers in architectural or legal firms, 13 explored opportunities overseas and the rest took on new challenges either as teachers, students in education studies or executives in commercial companies, religious and charitable organisations.

In September 1965, the College saw the founding of its third faculty, the Faculty of Business Administration.



Students get hands-on experience in the Civil Engineering Laboratory



A graduation ceremony in the early days



Jubilant graduates celebrate with friends and relatives



A graduate receives her certificate from President Lam Chi-fung

The College's academic portfolio of three faculties and 11 departments was further expanded in 1968 with the founding of the Department of Communication. This was the first academic discipline of its kind to be established in Hong Kong, offering courses in journalism, radio and television, broadcasting and public relations. The Department rapidly earned a high reputation in Hong Kong and became much in demand by student applicants.

In 1969-70, student numbers totalled 2,357, a more than threefold increase from the 672 students in the 1960-61 academic year.



Governor Sir Robert Black inspects the HKBC graduates in 1962

Sowing the seeds of whole person education

In his speech at the College's first Commencement in 1956, President Lam Chi-fung highlighted the institution's core concept of whole person education, which seeks to balance students' personal, academic, physical and spiritual development. The College's role as a Christian institution has enabled it to promote both liberal education and Chinese cultural thinking. In keeping with this combined approach, it was compulsory at this stage for freshman students to undertake subjects in Chinese, English, Chinese history, natural science and biblical studies. In addition, students of the departments of Mathematics, Civil Engineering or Business Administration were required to take at least two subjects in Social Sciences. Courses such as world history and English literature were compulsory for students in Chinese Language. For students of English Language, courses in psychology were required subjects.



Staff and student performers pose at the 1966 College Banquet



With its firm belief that student-centred extra-curricular activities help to cultivate students' balanced growth, students have always been strongly encouraged to create and manage their own academic and interests clubs. These complemented the events and activities organised by the institution to meet students' academic and social needs. In the early days, religious elements were also prominent in institution-run activities, since academic leaders such as President Lam Chi-fung maintained that religion was a substantial and preferred factor in contributing to character development. Students were thus required to attend courses on Christian teachings and attend bi-weekly religious services. Moreover, services and activities offered by the Chaplain's Office, which included Noontime Worship, Christian Emphasis Week and Baccalaureate Service, created an environment that fostered an understanding of the Christian heritage. Supported by the Chaplain's Office, the Christian Students' Union was established to advocate the Christian faith and way of life.





Students show their fun side in a soft-drink drinking competition



The Students' Union holds its first annual general meeting in 1968

The College's Students' Union was founded in November 1967 comprising an executive committee, a council, an editorial board and a number of subcommittees and executive organs. In keeping with its constitution, the Union strove to preserve its autonomy and self-governance as well as to facilitate students' all-round development and enhance their social awareness.



Students from the US visit the College and exchange views with a HKBC student



HKBC obtains support from many overseas organisations in various forms, including donations of books.



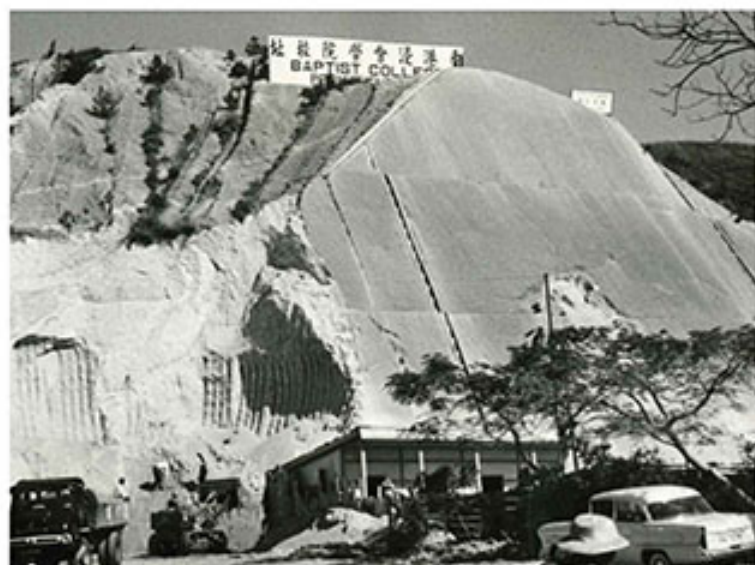
Reaching out to the world

From its founding, HKBC embarked on the path to achieve full internationalisation of the campus. This remains a key goal to this day. As early as 1957 President Lam Chi-fung emphasised the importance of establishing networks with overseas institutions as a means of broadening students' horizons and enhancing their future prospects. That summer, HKBC students went on exchange to Oklahoma University in the United States and in June, Baylor University in Texas announced collaboration plans with the College that involved the establishment of a teacher exchange programme, and a scholarship scheme for HKBC students.

From 1960 to 1970, cross-cultural exchange between HKBC and overseas networks was further assisted under the direction of career missionaries, drawing on a concept that emerged from US President John F Kennedy's Peace Corps programme. The Journeyman Programme was launched in 1964 and new graduates were supported in their work in developing countries as professionals and preachers.

Campus development in the 1960s

Ever since its establishment, and in no small part due to the tireless efforts of its leaders, Hong Kong Baptist College has been fortunate in receiving generous support, help that was invaluable in contributing to campus growth. A shining example of benefactors' tangible support came in 1965 when President Lam Chi-fung attended the International Baptist Convention and received about US\$200,000 for investment in campus development.



The Government grants a permanent campus site on Waterloo Road to the College in 1957



The ground-breaking ceremony of the permanent campus in 1959 marks a new stage of the College's development

In 1957, the Government granted the College its permanent address at Waterloo Road in Kowloon Tong. During its early years the College operated through co-used classrooms, laboratories, libraries and function halls at Pui Ching Middle School.

Finally on 1 May 1966, the College's campus on Waterloo Road, designed by renowned architect Mr Eric Cumine, was completed. The inauguration ceremony was held on 21 October that year with Governor Sir David Trench officiating. The occasion was highlighted by an inspirational speech by Dr Baker James Cauthen of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. President Lam also made a speech in which he gave credit to the ground-breaking achievements of the previous decade.

But above all, the inauguration of the new campus was a powerful symbol: a reaffirmation that the College and later the University had arrived as a permanent presence at its proudly held location at the foot of Lion Rock Hill.



Dr Lam Chi-fung signs a construction contract for the building of the permanent campus



Campus construction work is underway



The Waterloo Road Campus is completed in 1966