

## Press Release

12 November 2015

### **PolyU to Honour Esteemed Hotelier and Supporter Mr Ho Kwon Ping**

The School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM) at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is very pleased to announce that the Chairman of its Advisory Committee Mr Ho Kwon Ping will receive a Doctor of Business Administration *honoris causa* degree at the University's 21<sup>st</sup> Congregation on 14 November 2015. Mr Ho, Founder and Executive Chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, will receive the honorary doctorate alongside four other distinguished figures to be recognised for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to their fields, education and the broader community.

One of Singapore's most prominent business figures, Mr Ho received his higher education at home and in Taiwan and the US. During an early career in broadcast and print journalism he worked in Hong Kong as Economics Editor for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* before returning to Singapore in 1981 to lead his family's business. He then founded Banyan Tree with a single hotel in Phuket and developed it into a highly successful publicly listed conglomerate that now includes hotels, resorts, residences, spas, retail galleries and golf courses. The group's success is driven by its signature blend of romantic settings and environmental consciousness, backed by Mr Ho's vision of promoting social and economic progress through sustainable tourism supporting local communities.

That vision, with the corollary of developing talent within the region, corresponds exceptionally well to the SHTM's drive to create a new wave of hospitality education with an Asian focus. Recognising their mutual goal, in 2011 Banyan Tree and the School signed a partnership agreement involving two memoranda of understanding. The first memorandum aimed at furthering the two parties' efforts in promoting executive education for those already in the hospitality workforce, with the SHTM pledging to deliver tailored programmes to Banyan Tree associates at either its own premises or at Banyan Tree properties.

In the second memorandum, Banyan Tree pledged to offer a number of student internships each year to SHTM undergraduates and one-year industry placements to Mainland Chinese students eligible for admission to the School's MSc programmes.

Innovation has also been a driving force in the partnership, with Mr Ho already having inspired new students on Induction Day in 2007 when giving an inspirational speech as part of the SHTM's Dean's Distinguished Lecture series. The topic of Mr Ho's lecture was "Asian Era of World Tourism" and he asked the future industry leaders, "what will Chinese hospitality give the world as its innovation?" He later found one answer in SHTM Dean Professor Kaye Chon's vision for hospitality and tourism education with Hotel ICON at its centre, and offered to install an Angsana Spa in the hotel, the first such facility to showcase its service excellence outside a Banyan Tree property.

Aside from currently serving as Chairman of the SHTM's Advisory Committee, Mr Ho has taken on numerous other advisory positions, including as Chairman of Singapore

Management University. He has also received various awards for his outstanding contributions and accomplishments, the most recent being CNBC's Travel Business Leader Award Asia Pacific 2012. The SHTM is proud to be closely associated with this visionary tourism leader, and congratulates him on an honour truly deserved.



### **About PolyU School of Hotel and Tourism Management**

For over 35 years, PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management has refined a distinctive vision of hospitality and tourism education and become a world-leading hotel and tourism school. Ranked no. 2 in the world, the School is a symbol of excellence in the field, exemplifying its motto of *Leading Hospitality and Tourism*.

With 65 academic staff drawing from 20 countries and regions, the School offers programmes at levels ranging from undergraduate degrees to doctoral degrees. A member of the UNWTO Knowledge Network, the School was bestowed the McCool Breakthrough Award in 2012 by the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (ICHRIE) recognising its breakthrough in the form of its teaching and research hotel – Hotel ICON – the heart of the School's innovative approach to hospitality and tourism education.

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Press contact: Ms Pauline Ngan, Senior Marketing Manager  
School of Hotel and Tourism Management

Telephone: (852) 3400 2634

Email: [pauline.ngan@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:pauline.ngan@polyu.edu.hk)

Website: [www.polyu.edu.hk/htm](http://www.polyu.edu.hk/htm)