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PolyU to establish Robert H. Burns Scholarship for hotel and tourism students

Supported by the generous donation from world-renowned hotelier Mr Robert H. Burns, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) will establish the Robert H. Burns Scholarship to encourage outstanding students to study in the bachelor's and master's degree programmes of its School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM).

Mr Burns, founder of Regent International Hotels, and currently owner and developer of Grand Hotel a Villa Feltrinelli, Gargnano, Italy, is a legendary figure of the hotel industry famed for setting new benchmarks in luxury hospitality. He said, "I hope the scholarship will further encourage and support worthy local students to pursue a career in the hotel industry."

Prof. Kaye Chon, Chair Professor and Director of SHTM, said that the School is grateful for the generosity of Mr Burns, and is also delighted that the scholarship would enable the School to select young talents with a passion for the industry.

The Robert H. Burns Scholarship will include four scholarships per academic year for five years commencing the academic year 2008/09. The scholarships will support two full-time students enrolled on the Conversion programme BSc (Hons) in Hotel Management or BSc (Hons) in Tourism Management; and two full-time or part-time students enrolled on the MSc in Hotel Management or Tourism Management. Candidates would be selected on the basis of academic merits, participation in extra-curricular activities or work experience, personality and commitment to the hospitality industry.

A native of New York, Mr Burns has been contributing to the hospitality industry for six decades and has established a distinguished career both locally and globally.

After joining the Sheraton's hotels in 1960s, he founded Regent International Hotels in Hong Kong in 1970, building one of the industry's most renowned 5-star brands. Over 22 years the group opened 17 luxury hotels around the world. Flagship of the group was The Regent Hong Kong, an icon of the industry, combining Asian service excellence with western efficiency and luxury. It was voted 'best hotel in the world' in several international awards. He sold his interest in Regent to Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts in 1992.

In 2001, he completed his latest project—the exclusive 21-room Grand Hotel a Villa Feltrinelli on the shores of Lake Garda in Gargnano, Italy. It is one of the most admired luxury hotels in Europe.

Mr Burns helped develop the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), a forum for business leaders in the travel and tourism industry. With chief executives of some one hundred of the world's leading travel and tourism companies as its members, WTTC has a unique mandate and overview on all matters related to the industry. It works to raise awareness of travel and tourism as one of the world's largest industries, employing over 230 million people and generating more than 10 per cent of the world GDP. Mr Burns became its chairman in 1994.

He also created the Robert H. Burns Foundation, providing scholarships to Asian students for studies in the US. Mr Burns is a member of the Dean's Advisory Council at Cornell University's School of Hotel Management and the University of Hawaii's School of Travel Industry Management. He also lectures extensively throughout the Asia-Pacific for the US State Department and Pacific Area Travel Association.

PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management is a leading provider of hospitality education in the Asia-Pacific Region. It is ranked fourth among the world's top hotel and tourism schools based on research and scholarship, according to a study published in the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* in 2005.

With 50 academic staff drawing from 18 countries, the School offers programmes at levels ranging from PhD to Higher Diploma. It was awarded the "2003 International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators Institutional Award" in recognition of its significant contribution to tourism education, and is the only training centre in the Education and Training Network in Asia recognized by the World Tourism Organization.

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