

# Share the Mission: Philanthropy and Engagement for Universities

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## 1 Introduction

Universities transform lives and build tomorrow. They represent hope and change, aspiration and inspiration. Their core missions are teaching, research, and innovation, but when they carry out their missions well and nurture leaders who become the torch-bearers, when they contribute their knowledge and expertise to help society tackle challenges, and when they engage with their communities to promote shared goals and values, then universities become something larger, a fundamental part of the culture and spirit of a place. The more universities can achieve this, the more social capital they can build, then the more they will garner support from alumni who feel a natural bond and from benefactors who seek to invest in progress by funding institutions of higher learning with records of achievement. Educational philanthropy helps ensure a university's sustainability and fosters growth as well as discovery. It enables a university to help shape its community's social, economic, and technological development.

This chapter explores these principles and ideas as they relate to universities in countries across the world, but particularly in Asia and in Hong Kong, where university development and funding are historically different from that of major private universities in the west, but which over the last three decades have undergone major change. During that time and over the course of much experimentation, a fundraising methodology arose that has become a kind of litmus test for assessing a university's readiness to engage its community and stakeholders—its alumni, its donors, its local and national leaders, and its global partners in institutions involved in the acquisition and applicability of knowledge across every field of endeavor. The methodology is both art and science. It involves branding, community outreach, networking, and messaging on social platforms

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that turn fundraising into entrepreneurship, one rooted in recognized best practices, ethics, and an internal university infrastructure dedicated to institutional advancement by nurturing a philosophy of giving.

## 2 Philosophy of Giving

A philosophy of giving to a university grows along two tracks, one of paying back, out of loyalty or gratitude, and one of paying forward, out of desire to honor civic or personal achievement, or of commitments to mitigate social problems or increase what we know about the world in which we live. Every gift carries with it a story and a dream; the university becomes the depository, the place where stories and dreams are held and memorialized and acted upon. In the Confucian tradition, we individuals in a society have both emotional bonds and righteous responsibilities. We cherish *Qing* (情) and we treasure *Yi* (義). It is a highly desirable equation. As the saying goes, “*Qing* and *Yi* are worth a thousand taels of gold,” taels being a unit of worth in ancient China. One thousand taels was very high worth.

Intrinsically, educational philanthropy resides first in the emotional bonds that link alumni to their universities. Alumni become part of their universities' histories and are steeped in their traditions and values. But in many societies, including in Hong Kong and across Asia, citizens in the larger community want to support their universities beyond the taxes they pay to local governments to fund higher education. They feel a responsibility for their success that can be considered righteous, but in a humble way. This commitment flows from a deeply felt conviction, shaped partly by the ravages of war and deprivation in the middle of the last century, that education is the one sure path to prosperity for the young and progress for the community. They want to be part of a university's success; they want to help it push past the boundaries of knowledge.

Private universities in the west benefit from great endowments accumulated over centuries, but in many parts of the world, state universities rely largely on public funding. This is why such universities must build relationships with external members of their communities—alumni, benefactors, and others. They must fashion genuine partnerships based on trust. The more donations they receive, the more latitude they have in allocating resources and in strategic development. More and more, universities are attuned to this, and to the value of partnerships that increases over time. Donors and in many cases their descendants become loyal friends of the universities they embrace; they become vested in their success. Their donations are not mere transactions and are not only about size and quantity. Donations are symbols of their embrace of, and faith in, the university's mission.

This is why universities must articulate clear and convincing missions. For donors as much as university leaders, missions matter. In simple terms, beyond teaching and research, what is the university's *purpose*? Benefactors want to be part of a greater purpose than themselves. They want to help move communities ahead and create knowledge. Universities that pay only lip service and leave it only to the offices of development and alumni relations to project the mission leave the value of obvious partners untapped. Partners work across the university, in offices of student affairs, communications, marketing, and admissions. Some of the potentially most valuable partners are in the classrooms and labs—the teachers and researchers. A university's faculty can project missions with more resonance than a poster, press release or speech. And they must all be willing to welcome alumni and benefactors as partners.

Later in this chapter, we will discuss some tools, including tax incentives and matching gifts, that governments make available to universities to engage their communities and encourage donors to become mission partners. We will also examine the strategies universities employ, including the cycle of donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship, and the importance of viewing donations as not a case of harvesting only major donors, but of building a "donation pyramid" anchored by many donors regularly contributing lesser amounts that can provide a stronger foundation for sustainability and growth. Finally, we will stress the importance of considering alumni through all the different lenses that apply—their experience on campus, their age, their professions, their career stage, their aspirations—and the challenge of navigating the social, political, and economic issues that arise during any era and which can complicate the seemingly uncomplicated idea of educational philanthropy.

The truth of that observation became tragically obvious in 2020, when the world was turned upside down almost overnight by the Covid-19 tsunami. The pandemic's impact on families and communities has been so horrific (and may

continue to be for some unknowable time) that mere words fail to fully capture it, but beyond the human toll lies the devastating impact on fundraising for universities and public-minded institutions. At the same time, however, the pandemic illustrates why communities turn to universities for knowledge and expertise, and why the university's sustainability and strategic development are so vital.

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### 3 Covid Disruption and Donation

Worldwide, Covid-19 sent waves of disruption over every aspect of life. But the economic cost alone was in the trillions of US dollars by the summer of 2020. Apart from the anguish caused by more deaths and disturbances to our daily routines, the path to recovery is uncertain. But crises have a way of uniting people and deepening their compassion. They cause people to want to work together and turn to those in their community who can help lead the way.

In Hong Kong, my hometown, as soon as the outbreak began to spread in January 2020, the community turned to the universities for knowledge, expertise, and leadership. Three renowned scholars—Professors Gabriel Leung, Kwok-yung Yuen, Keiji Fukuda—from the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) where I work, were invited to join the four-person expert panel the Hong Kong government created to advise on intervention protocols and quarantine enforcement. With long-standing public and private funding support, the professors and their colleagues have been conducting pioneering research on the paths of virus transmission, epidemiological modelling, and vaccine development.

Our professors also shared their research findings with the international community, accumulated since the shock 17 years ago of the outbreak in Hong Kong and elsewhere of the coronavirus known as SARS, the acronym for severe acute respiratory syndrome. Covid-19 packs a far deadlier punch in some who become infected. Even so, while helping fight and ultimately suppress the spread of SARS, the university's experts gained insights that now helped Hong Kong contain the pandemic far more successfully than most regions, including South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas.

Still, the disruption to the routines of Hong Kong life led to a frightful sense of crisis that caused donors, despite deteriorating and worrisome economic conditions, to want to contribute to the university's efforts. Without being asked or asking for proposals, donors gave gifts ranging from US\$2 million to US\$200,000. The donations included proceeds from an art auction and a collection from the staff of a law firm. Although like many he was losing money because many businesses were closed, one donor said he simply wanted to give researchers "a pat on the shoulders."

Li Ka Shing, the Hong Kong-based billionaire, renowned philanthropist, and namesake of the HKU Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine who endowed the faculty with a transformative gift of HK\$1 billion (US\$128 million) to the university 15 years ago, also gave again. As the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, Li hastened to donate millions to the global fight at different stages, from masks and protective gear to medical equipment, as well as relief funds to support small businesses to help them stay afloat. Established in 1980, the Li Ka Shing Foundation has, to date, donated more than HK\$27 billion (US\$3.5 billion) to education and healthcare, two causes particularly close to his heart [1]. He has funded top universities' medical research, creating a global alliance that includes HKU, Stanford University, the University of Toronto, and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge [2].

In July 2020, on top of further pledges for medical and healthcare projects, he announced an unprecedented Career Seeding Fund; it provided HK \$50,000 (US\$6400) to each medical student graduating in 2020 and 2021 from HKU, to symbolize the value and importance of those joining the profession at such a critical time. The seeding fund for young doctors was reminiscent of a program Li started in 2016, which provided a grant on a blanket basis (i.e. no specific-project approval required) to all students graduating from secondary schools in underprivileged districts. At the time of the award for young doctors, the Chairman of the Li Ka Shing Foundation expressed appreciation to the medical professionals serving Hong Kong's infected and sick: "In these particularly challenging and vulnerable times, your conscientiousness and perseverance are a bright light of assurance to Hong Kong" [3].

Covid-19 raised a big question for those of us who work in universities—can we weather a financial storm? Each university has a unique mix of revenue streams and Covid-19 raised immediate threats of budget cuts [4]. There may well be decreases in state support, federal support, research grants, endowment returns, and auxiliary revenues. Then there is the loss of tuition payments due to declines in enrollments, as much as 15% of domestic students and 25% of international students, according to the American Council on Education. McKinsey & Company, the management consulting firm, also estimated that even if the virus were brought under control by fall 2020, about 25% of public colleges and universities and almost half of private institutions will face budget deficits of at least 5%.

Despite the economic devastation Covid-19 has wreaked, it also makes a compelling case for universities to appeal for donations with a renewed sense of purpose. Many public-minded institutions, especially non-governmental organizations and social delivery groups, rely on philanthropy to offer immediate relief for the grassroots, for the elderly, the underprivileged, medical personnel in need of

supplies, and for children whose remote learning is hampered by lack of access to technology. These are all obviously worthy causes that have drawn support, but as the development of a vaccine against Covid-19 became national and global priorities, universities and their medical research partners began receiving millions of US dollars in donations.

For example, as early as April, 2020 the University of Toronto announced a gift of CA\$10 million (US\$7.45 million) from the Temerty Foundation to create the Dean's Covid-19 Priority Fund [5]. The namesake of the foundation is James Temerty, a self-made entrepreneur with a long record of philanthropy who pioneered clean-energy development in Canada. A statement issued by the foundation at the time underlined the urgency of developing a Covid-19 response: "... (We) want to support a local network of heroes fighting on behalf of all of us ... to discover a long-term solution that can help us stabilize and recover from this devastating crisis ... and give the talented scientists some of the tools they need to accelerate the most promising research." In its own statement, the university noted: "Around the globe, philanthropists are giving generously to support their communities and help address the Covid-19 crisis... Toronto is home to some of the world's brightest minds in biomedical research and clinical-care innovation, and this gift has already helped us to scale up their work quickly."

No one need be persuaded of the severity of the Covid-19 pandemic. The virus was not even identified until January of 2020, but by the end of July, seven months later, it had taken more than 670,000 lives worldwide and infected more than 17 million. (And by the end of September 2020, the number of cases had surpassed 33 million and more than one million people died.) Appeals for support of community-based emergency responses will find a ready ear, but like the Temerty Foundation, many benefactors across the globe will seek to underwrite the search for long-term solutions and an infrastructure to combat emerging diseases. In Japan, in June of 2020, Tadashi Yanai, chairman and head of Fast Retailing, the company behind the clothing retailer Uniqlo, pledged US\$93 million for research into Covid-19 and other communicable diseases. The donation was made to Kyoto University, to be split between two Nobel Prize winners in medicine, Shinya Yamanaka and Tasuku Honjo. "We have the same passion to truly make Japan better," Yanai told Yamanaka and Honjo. "I would like to make efforts so that Japan does not decline after the virus subsides" [6].

Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico's largest private, nonprofit university system, encompassing 25 campuses with more than 93,000 students, did not wait for benefactors to come calling. It launched its first-ever multi-priority campaign to seek emergency student support and funding for research and its frontline healthcare programs. University officials were initially hesitant to contact donors to talk about

the university's needs, but a volunteer told them to "just keep fund-raising." So they did, with a campaign dubbed "We Can Do This Together." It raised US\$2.6 million for emergency economic support for students and US\$22 million for its research and healthcare programs. A university official said the university's long-term ties to donors was key. "The essence is ... being close to the donors, tell(ing) them what the university is doing, giv(ing) them stories of people in the frontline ... it is easy to get a timeslot from donors now during the lockdown" [7].

Being close to donors led to a US\$1 million grant to fund coronavirus research at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in the US state of Tennessee. A well-known country music performer, Dolly Parton, said a longtime friend and researcher, Dr. Naji Abumrad, told her the university was making progress in the search for a coronavirus cure [8]. She said her donation was also aimed at encouraging people who "can afford it to make donations."

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#### 4 Taxing Effects

Many universities in the United States are the fortunate beneficiaries of a culture of giving that is ingrained early on in the minds and hearts of their alumni. The transformative impact of large and small donations over centuries may have contributed as much to the status and certainly the stability of universities such as Harvard, Stanford, and Yale as the accomplishments of their alumni. There is an old saying that comes to mind—the first thing a college student learns is to donate to their alma mater. However, this is not quite the case in Asia, where universities mostly started as government-subsidized, and hence the public perception is that it is primarily the government's responsibility to support higher education. The notion of systematically seeking private donations only started some three decades ago.

In the US, tax incentives written into law are also a means by which universities engage donors. They encourage giving and shape people's behavior. They enable donors to take deductions on their income tax returns for donations made to universities, thereby reducing the taxes they owe and allowing them more say in how their money is spent. It is commonly accepted that US tax incentives are crucial to the culture of giving in the US. "Tax incentives exert a direct pull on charitable giving," according to the Doing Good Index 2020. "In Asia, where philanthropists and corporations often work in tandem with governments, tax incentives also send a strong signal of official support for charitable giving that amplifies their impact" [9].

However, tax incentives in Asia are not considered significant enough to encourage donations to the same degree they do in the US because rates of tax deduction vary widely. In addition, incentives for charitable giving upon

death in the form of bequests are not widespread. Only six economies even broach the issue of inheritance tax, and among these only Japan, Korea, Philippines, and Taiwan offer incentives for charitable bequests.

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#### 5 The Magic of Matching

In 2003, the Hong Kong Government decided to try to nurture a philosophy of giving. It was a noble idea, and it worked. The government proposed to match, dollar for dollar, any donations made to the eight government-subsidized universities. It set aside US\$129 million, or one billion in Hong Kong dollars, and essentially challenged the community to give in order that beneficiaries get more. Government leaders were uncertain how citizens would respond, but within a year the set-aside fund was depleted as donations flowed into the universities, and not just the big ones. The University of Hong Kong, with its long history, raised 50% more than previous year. But the Hong Kong Institute of Education (renamed Hong Kong Education University in 2016), where alumni were mostly teachers, recorded a donation increase of 100-fold. The plan generated such enthusiasm that one donor borrowed from his bank in order to donate in time and double the impact of his gift [2].

The government matching program was renewed several times over the next two decades and expanded to include more than 20 institutions. In the second round of the program, the match was reduced to 50 cents per one dollar raised simply because the program was too successful. In July 2019, for the eighth round of the program, HK\$2.5 billion (US\$323 million), was set aside. The program was a clear effort by the government to encourage private donations and diversify funding for universities. Some donors said the matching was surely the best investment as it immediately yielded a 50% return. It signified "the best moment to give."

Hong Kong's first matching round in 2003 struck a chord in the United Kingdom. It was cited in a study issued a year later by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), which conducted research on behalf of the Sutton Trust, a major UK philanthropy that seeks to increase social mobility for students, no matter their parents' socio-economic background (also the goal of one of the Li Ka Shing Foundation programs cited above). The study became known as the Sutton Report [10] and its purpose was to highlight educational success stories and best practices in philanthropy to boost giving in the UK. "Match funding would help kick start this process at universities across the country and could help raise a significant amount of extra money," the Sutton Trust founder, Sir Peter Lampi, said at the time. "I believe there is growing consensus that match

funding is the way forward. We are finally recognizing that fostering a climate of private giving ... is crucial if we want to maintain the position of UK universities on the world stage.”

In urging the UK government to launch a matching grant program, the Sutton Report described Hong Kong’s then still-new program as a success because it had led to more individual support for education while also providing more government investment in education and showcasing the public value of philanthropy to a community. The Sutton Report noted that the Hong Kong program had encouraged more support not only from alumni, but from other constituencies as well. It recommended that a matched-donation plan in the UK be structured to promote giving to universities that were new to fundraising, as Hong Kong’s were at the time, and to challenge universities with existing fundraising and development offices to raise their sights. The Hong Kong model, with its ceiling on the amount available for government matching, was one way forward for the UK. A sliding matching scale, with larger matches for smaller donations and vice versa, was another.

The Sutton Report said that with increased non-governmental income, universities could enhance social mobility and educational opportunities for students regardless of their socio-economical standing. The report also said its research showed that in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world, including Singapore, Canada, and the US, matching schemes do not reduce public funding, but rather increase public support and a university’s ability to build strategic links with its constituencies.

The UK government launched its own three-year pilot matching program in 2005. At the time, Professor Eric Thomas, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bristol and Chair of the Government Taskforce into Increasing Voluntary Giving in Higher Education, observed: “No government is likely to be in a position to increase university funding sufficiently through general taxation... Higher tuition fees are part of the answer, but so is philanthropy .... It’s time the UK caught up, but it won’t do so unless experienced professionals ... lead the fundraising effort” [11].

Matching is indeed a magic wand in fundraising—and it does not have to be the government that takes the lead. At HKU, in 2005, Vice-Chancellor Lap-Chee Tsui believed that the government’s matching scheme was not attractive enough since it was only offered intermittently. Therefore, he proposed to alumnus Stanley Ho, another major Hong Kong businessman and philanthropist, that a challenge grant be launched to encourage alumni participation. Ho took up the challenge—he immediately set aside HK\$500 million (US\$64 million) over five years, to match dollar for dollar any donation made by alumni. If the annual target of

HK\$100 million was not reached at the end of each year, he would take back the remaining portion. Ho joked good naturedly that, if alumni did not come forth, he won. On the other hand, if alumni responded enthusiastically, then the goal of encouraging alumni participation would be reached, he still won.

The response was at first slow, but soon gathered momentum. By the end of the first year, donations from alumni increased by 600% while the number of individual alumni donors increased two-fold. Halfway through the fifth and last year of the program, the annual target was reached. With an aggregate of 13,000 donors, 70% of them first-time donors ranging from 19 to 95 years old, and gifts ranging from HK\$20 to more than a million, the grand total of HK\$1 billion (US\$128 million) benefitted more than 100 units across the university [12]. The Stanley Ho Alumni Challenge won international accolades, and was commended as “extraordinary; donors knew what it meant to be giving in new ways that are not embedded in the culture; he knew he had to develop a spirit of giving; lots of participation; involvement constant and steady [13]”.

Corporations across the world are now starting to give challenge grants, encouraging their staff to give to specific causes that the company will match. It is a welcome way to build staff loyalty and boost morale, while celebrating the feel-good factor in seasons of generosity like Christmas, New Year, and company anniversaries.

Here I am also including a table showing, over two selected periods, the relative contribution of philanthropy in comparison to the total yearly budget at The University of Hong Kong. This is by no means a comprehensive analysis, but may throw light on the possible impact and significance of donation support.

	Donations & benefactions (HK\$) (M)	University total income (HK\$) (M)	% of University total income from donations	University total expenditure (HK\$) (M)
2011–12	288	6013	5	6703
2012–13 (Government matching)	1117	9772	11	7481
2013–14	1527	10,381	15	7879
2017–18	641	10,846	6	9455
2018–19	442	10,670	4	10,279
2019–20 (Government matching)	1232	12,514	10	11,062

Source Financial Report, The University of Hong Kong

## 6 The Donation Pyramid

At HKU, I teach a course titled “Contemporary Issues in Philanthropy” for the Master of Social Sciences in Non-Profit Management. While most people tend to assume fundraising is only about major donors with deep pockets, I often start the class by discussing the “Donation Pyramid” to explain in Hong Kong dollars why the assumption is faulty and to get to the essence of fundraising strategy?



### The donation pyramid illustrated [14]

Donation Target: 1 Million Dollars  
 Projected Target Donors: 100 people at different levels  
 (noting it is easier to get donors for smaller amounts)

\$ 100,000	×	2	=	200,000
\$ 40,000	×	6	=	240,000
\$ 30,000	×	12	=	360,000
\$ 5000	×	30	=	150,000
\$ 1000	×	50	=	50,000
Total				1,000,000

The chart demonstrates that while 20 people donate HK \$800,000, 80 others together donate HK\$200,000.

In a nutshell, there are leadership gifts that continually raise the bar—transformative major gifts. In financial and operational terms, these also have all high ROIs (Return on Investments). The administrative costs associated with seeking these gifts are more concentrated and targeted, and thus usually lower per each dollar raised.

Then there is the larger number of smaller gifts. The amount per gift may seem less significant, and certainly not transformative, yet these represent no less a vote of confidence. The number of participants in a fundraising effort reflects strong backing for a cause. There is a temptation to overlook or dismiss these, as there is usually more administration involved and no less effort, while the total donation amount may not be that high, and so the ROI is deemed low. But even in the most commercial terms, many of these donors will likely grow career-wise or business-wise, and so

grow in their power to give. The wide base of participation at the pyramid’s bottom provides an institution a solid foundation, now and for the future.

A university, or any healthy and sustainable institution intent on a future, must not seek only quick gains, but instead consider the lesson of the pyramid and not under-value “basic donors.” It is imperative that we treasure the participation rate as much as the donation amount in any campaign. Giving is a profound catalyst for engagement, a statement, and a visible act. In planning any fundraising campaign, a university would be wise to also demonstrate its principles of equality, equity, and respect for individuals—providing an equal, welcomed opportunity for everyone to contribute and participate. It is vital to embrace the wider community, to welcome goodwill from different sectors, and engage a large audience. As in a rally, concert, or soccer game, mass participation is infectious and uplifting. Crowd endorsement will in turn give the campaign legitimacy, and remind us again of the goal of engagement by sharing values and mission. Fundraising is never just about money.

## 7 University as Family

In professional fundraising protocols, a well-known cycle exists: Cultivation–Solicitation–Stewardship. You cultivate your relationship with the prospect, then when the right time comes, you ask, you succeed, and after donor-recognition rituals, you steward the relationship. Any client relationship management manual in the business world will share the same jargon, utilitarian though it may seem.

In parts of Asia, in a tradition that is more subtle and often described as Confucian, relationships have a deeper cultural dimension. Apart from the shared mission, there are, as we noted in the introduction to this chapter, emotional bonds (*Qing*) and righteous responsibilities (*Yi*) that tie benefactors and recipients together. They are worth “a thousand taels of gold” [14]. They arise from true friendships and loyalty, mutual caring and support, and a shared sense of responsibility for life’s ups and downs. In this tradition, the university family is real; there is a strong sense of community and continuity. Genuine and meaningful bonds are made with fond memories that in turn shape the institution’s traditions or culture. These cultural bonds are embedded in the act of giving. Thus, donation becomes more than mere transaction; it is never a matter of quantity or size, but altruism that celebrates not just the mission of a university, but friendship and trust between a benefactor and the institution or its leaders.

One of Hong Kong’s most prominent civic leaders, William Mong Man-Wai, built a business based on trust, which also was at the heart of his philosophy of giving. He became famous for forging cross-cultural commercial links

in Japan and Mainland China and for being the founding chairman of Shun Hing Group, which distributed products manufactured in Japan by Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd., which was re-named the Panasonic Corporation in 2008. His firm sold ten million Matsushita-made rice-cookers in Hong Kong over five decades [15]. He once said that his contracts with Matsushita were not grounded as much in legal details as they were “a handshake that represented trust, loyalty, and friendship” [16]. This same principle, this contract of trust, was the guiding spirit of the Shun Hing Education and Charity Fund, which Mong founded in 1984. It donated billions of Hong Kong dollars to civic projects and universities in Hong Kong, Mainland China, the UK and the US. When Mong passed away in 2010, his son David Mong carried on with the same spirit of trust, loyalty and profound friendship in the Charity Fund’s continuing benefactions to universities and society.

Mong’s *modus operandi* was common among an older generation of philanthropists, the early entrepreneurs who built business empires in the East. Trust was the pivotal factor, first and foremost. With a handshake, or a nod of the head, they would pledge a major donation, a transformative gift, and leave it to their executives to follow up with the operational details.

With globalization, all top institutions in the world compete for the same major donors. In the past ten years, Hong Kong became famous for having possibly the highest per capita concentration of billionaires, and thus many potential major donors, all within a small urban city with a population of only seven million.

The likely single highest donation from Hong Kong, US \$350 million, was given in 2014 by the Chan Family and its Morningside Foundation to the Harvard School of Public Health—then the largest gift in the university’s 378-year history [17]—which was renamed the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public. Alumnus Gerald Chan said at the time, “(the gift) was unsolicited, unrestricted, and unexpected—unsolicited by Harvard, unrestricted by the donor and unexpected by the public. Harvard never came to me to solicit a gift. The best philanthropic giving comes from the heart, oftentimes a grateful heart. I am grateful to this university for the education that I received here. That education changed my life. I am also grateful to my late father, who instilled in me the values by which I have lived my life. This gift is a way of memorializing my father and the values that he stood for.”

University presidents from the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia regularly make Hong Kong a stop during their international tours, not without reason. It was jokingly said that, on any one day, the number of overseas university presidents in Hong Kong outnumbered the local university presidents. At the time the comment was popularly shared in the donor world of Hong Kong, about ten years ago, Hong

Kong had only eight universities (government-funded; some of them consistently high on international rankings).

Those familiar with philanthropic lore in Hong Kong also like to recall a famous story involving Professor Tien Chang-lin, Chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley, and a leading businessman seated next to him on Tien’s flight from Hong Kong back to California. The Chancellor spoke of his mission at the university with the stranger he had just met as they flew across the Pacific Ocean. By the time the plane landed, the businessman had become so impressed by Tien’s vision that he pledged a US \$1 million gift. The men and their families subsequently became life-long friends [18].

A Hong Kong philanthropist who asked to remain anonymous also tells a story about a university president from North America who came to see him for what the philanthropist thought was just a courtesy visit, but who instead “audaciously asked me for a US\$1 million donation at the breakfast table!” The philanthropist, modest and generous as he was usually known to be, was quite offended. “What does he think I am? A money tree? I would never want to see him again!” For his part, the university president thought he might as well be direct because he had come a long way and it might be another year before he could meet the donor again. He had also decided that he would not express disappointment if the donor declined—unaware that in the donor’s culture his demeanor could have been interpreted as impudent, if not insulting [19]. These stories, which I was fortunate enough to hear or witness first-hand, found their way into my book documenting close to 100 tales of giving that reflect a wide spectrum of cultural differences and attitudes.

Indeed, cultures differ, and so do generations. Young people in their 20 and 30s, the so-called millennials, are different from the super wealthy of another time who decided to donate, then left it to others to work out the details. The millennials, like any other group, cannot all be put in the same stereotypical box, but some experts say there are certain common traits that will require some re-defining of philanthropic engagement while challenging universities in particular to adopt new strategies of engagement. They grew up in the age of the 24-hour news cycle and are digitally connected, but their digital engagement with friends and family does not always translate to engagement with non-profit causes. They want to be creative and are “solution-centered” [20]. They prefer collaborative leadership, hands-on involvement, and tangible milestones such as those sometimes offered by nonprofit organizations—for example, a small donation that will buy a net in Africa to help prevent the spread of malaria for one family.

My experience has shown they also want transparency and direct conversations to inspire trust. They want to know where the money is going, how it is going to be spent, and

specific stories of impact. They are not satisfied to just share the institution's vision in abstract terms. With universities, they want to understand where their dollars can go, and measure the impact systematically. They want to create movements for change. These millennial traits can lead to better connections between organizations and potential supporters, but they could also lead to demands for involvement, which might raise issues of academic autonomy when involvement amounts to excessive interference. There is surely a fine line between engagement and intervention. That line is still evolving, and all the possibilities and potentials are yet to be explored.

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## 8 Alumni Value

Due to their education, alumni tend to be in an affluent demographic. They understand the positive impacts of their university lives and degrees. They share similar journeys and have walked through the same gates. They want to be part of a network and feel a sense of belonging. They do not give just out of nostalgia—but also out of gratitude, pride, purpose, the sharing of a larger mission, and of a sense of paying back. Those who once benefitted from scholarships may want to give back to the next generations and even set up scholarships in their names. They also want to be appreciated and feel that their input matters. Their alma mater can be as much a lifelong bond as a base for lifelong learning.

Alumni can be advisors, advocates, and allies in support of their alma mater's mission. They can be highly effective spokespersons with legislative bodies, regulatory agencies, media outlets, community organizations, and even the major donors. Engaging with a dynamic, accomplished network of alumni leaders benefits the university in its community outreach. They can donate their time and expertise, in volunteering, providing advice, mentoring, student recruitment, networking, and referrals. They can help forge long-term relationships that will benefit the institution for decades to come. They can volunteer as guest lecturers and honorary professors. They can enrich the university's social network, and help reach out to business, financial, and technological leaders. They can be a major part of the university's social capital.

However, other organizations will see them as assets as well. In virtually every society, the nonprofit or charitable sector will have doubled in number in the last decade. They offer no less noble causes to support—helping the underprivileged, the handicapped, the abandoned. They want their time and expertise too. Therefore, universities must not under-value the importance of alumni engagement. Alumni associations are one form of engagement; they are useful as networks or nuclei, but alumni are not a “body.” One expert

writes: “They are individuals whose campus experiences, current life stages, and points of connection vary widely. To be successful, therefore, alumni relations programs must carefully differentiate among alumni and speak to the interests, needs and affiliations of each alumna or alumnus. Often the engagement involves supporting the alumni, especially in the early stages of their lives. In the aftermath of the global economic crisis, for example, alumni are looking for their institutions to provide career services, mentoring and networking opportunities, and retraining and skills development” [21].

The student experience on campus is also vital and will greatly determine the quality of alumni engagement. Any graduate who had a miserable experience as a student will be hard to enlist as an ambassador. But that reality should not stand in the way of attempts to engage even the student who had a bad experience. Despite it, they understand and appreciate the benefits the institution can bring, the culture and values it represents, and the life-long partner it can be. Alumni engagement can result in a new appreciation of the university experience. And that can build over time. Cornell University found that a donation exceeding more than US\$1 million was typically preceded by 13 smaller donations—and that 80% of the time, the first three donations were less than US\$250 [22].

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## 9 Uneasy Engagement

Universities are pluralistic communities and that is reflected in their principles and in their public engagement and communications. One of the rewards of participating in a university community is the freedom to debate and learn different views. But pluralism can be tricky to navigate and difficult for the public to appreciate. University of Edinburgh Vice-Chancellor Peter Mathieson described the issue this way in a Times Higher Education virtual summit: “One of the characteristics of universities is the ability to disagree with one another, have a debate and come to a viewpoint. In the public eye that may come across as disunity or lack of clarity.” He said UK media had characterized academic wishy-washiness as “one expert says this, and one expert says something else. That sends potentially quite a confusing message to the public. Are experts able to come to a view or not?” [23].

While a university may cherish diversity of opinion, sometimes views can be sharply polarized, especially when issues have a political edge, and the university gets caught between opposing camps. It can inadvertently become a battlefield pitting factions from within and outside the university. This can result in negative media scrutiny, public cynicism, alumni displeasure, even official criticism. These consequences can become challenging obstacles for



professionals in university engagement who steward external relationships.

In today's world, fragmentation seems an inevitable fact of life. Students, academics, alumni, benefactors, and the community are divided along many lines and split into different interest groups. Channels of communication, the ways to reach them, are also fragmenting. Some want to receive online publications; others insist on printed copies of university magazines and even posted letters. Then there are all the different online platforms where people communicate or find information. Consequently, the university has to communicate in different ways to cater to different needs and attitudes. Mass marketing becomes niche marketing.

But universities are also about innovation, and challenges lead to innovations. For example, the rapid growth of online learning may be a useful model for boosting alumni engagement. The Covid-19 pandemic closed campuses and forced universities to move from in-person to online learning and virtual classrooms, or a hybrid, leading to potential new ways of learning for everyone, including webinars and Zoom meetings. Similarly, the development of MOOCs (the acronym for massive open online courses) can lead to life-long learning opportunities for alumni and donors, featuring subjects of particular interest to them, for potentially worldwide audiences. As one expert has noted, "Offering major donors access to MOOCs on subjects of particular interest to them will represent a quantum leap from a faculty member giving a 30-minute talk at a campaign dinner" [24].

## 10 Conclusion

Philanthropy and engagement are crucial for the modern university, private or public, in the west or the east. To grow and to discover, to become a fundamental part of the culture and spirit of a place, universities need the support of their communities as the communities need them to share their knowledge and expertise, in ordinary times and in times of crisis.

As we noted at the outset, beyond teaching and research, universities are about transforming lives and building tomorrow. These are social contracts universities make with their stakeholders—their students, their alumni, their communities, their benefactors. In order to try to meet their commitments, universities must nurture a philosophy of giving, which requires the development of a fundraising strategy based on shared goals and values, and a fundraising methodology that is both art and science—a methodology that includes tailored approaches to alumni and donors with unique histories and interests, and fundamental concepts such as the Donation Pyramid.

Our goals, strategies, and methodologies naturally evolve with time and with change. But the values universities share

with their communities are the bedrock principles that tie them together and produce, as Confucius would say, emotional bonds and righteous responsibilities. Universities, as citadels of knowledge and beacons in humanity, must continue to share their noble missions and visions as well as intimately engage with the wider world.

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