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*Dr. Jennifer Gao is the Resident Fellow (Associate Master) of the Graduate House. We also thank Prof. Ben Young (Master), Mr. Dick Chow (Manager) and Ms. Chole Liu (Honorary Resident Tutor) for revising and proofreading this Newsletter.
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Legends, Challenges and Plans: An interview with Master Ben

Prof. Ben Young, Sarah Wang and Nicanor Guinto

More than just a student residence hall, the Graduate House (GH) is home away from home to most of postgraduate students of The University of Hong Kong. Its superb architectural design, spacious living rooms, top-of-the-line amenities and services, friendly living environment, and, not to mention, its congenial location, makes it an ideal living and work space for postgraduate students undertaking intensive research activities. At the helm of the management team that maintains the day-to-day activities of, and for the residence hall is Master Ben Young.

Master Ben, as we fondly call him, is, at the same time, Professor of Civil Engineering, and former warden of an undergraduate residence hall for nine years before moving to GH. Since his appointment as head of the Graduate House in 2015, Master Ben and his equally dedicated team are working hard in this familial space, and a place that is not only intellectually stimulating, but also emotionally and physically nurturing.

At the pipeline are overall improvement of amenities and services of the 20-year old facility, increased support and encouragement to interest group and other residents activities, and to mark its 20th anniversary, greater engagement with the wider community, especially those in need.

This year, we have witnessed major facilities upgrade from Wi-Fi connectivity installed in every room, to new television sets and sofas in student lounges, physical and sports equipment, and snacks vending machines at the P1 common floor. For Master Ben, the key to ensuring better living conditions for residents is maintaining an open ear to comments and suggestions of the residents themselves, and for the management to try its best with whatever limited resources they have to provide for the residents' needs.

In an interview with Master Ben (MBY), our GH Newsletter editors Sarah and Nic (GHN) ask the Master about his insights, further challenges and plans for the residence hall, and what he wishes the residents to participate and help.

GHN: What are the challenges of heading a postgraduate hall, particularly the Graduate House?

MBY: Being the Master of the Graduate House is challenging...
because apart from ensuring the welfare of the residents, I also need to look after the entire premises of the building, including the facilities in the property, such as the rental of lecture hall, seminar rooms and offices. The Hong Kong Jockey Club is one of the donors for establishment of the GH in 1998, and it was designed to be a self-funded residence hall. So, one of my major responsibilities is to make sure that there is a healthy budget. Nonetheless, the Graduate House has an excellent management committee that includes both staff of HKU and the residents themselves, through the Residents Committee (RC), who work together with the Master in decision-making and planning for strategic development.

GHN: What are your plans for the residents of the GH?

MBY: I wish to provide the residents a balanced set of activities. Aside from socialization activities such as BBQ dinners and Wednesday dinner gathering with Master, I also wish to provide cultural and intellectual activities. This year, we had a magic show, and Italian song concert. We also co-organised the Interdisciplinary Research Competition with the PGSA and Graduate School. In addition, we co-organised the HKSTP Internship & Career Expo with Graduate School and CEDARS for those who wish to explore opportunities after graduation. But more importantly, this year, in preparation for the 20th Anniversary of the GH which we will celebrate next year, I’m hoping that we could give back to the people who are in greater need. The University has set the 3+1 “i”s development goal, and they are Internationalisation, Innovation, Interdisciplinarity that converge to create the last “I” Impact. The GH will definitely support the 3+1 “i”s. I hope that we could join together in an effort to do some long-term social work that will benefit society. Ever since I took this position, it’s one of the things that I really wanted to do together with the residents.

GHN: What are the notable things in GH that you believe you and the rest of the team have accomplished for the GH so far, and are still planning to do?

MBY: I want to pay attention to your needs and make sure that environment in the GH is comfortable enough, such that you can concentrate on your research without worrying about living conditions. We put your views collected by RC on records and try to cater your needs to the best of my ability. On top of newly purchased television sets, vending machines, rubbish bins, induction cookers, and sofas, we installed wifi routers in every room for faster internet connection. We also have contacted Towngas to install
gas pipes into the building because we have received reports that sometimes, the hot water is not available. The boilers are already aging, so we decided to upgrade it by using gas. Once the Towngas people have installed the gas pipes, we’re planning to reconstruct the laundry area then purchase nine more washing machines and dryers for the residents’ convenience. We noted that the existing ones are not enough anymore. We’re also planning to upgrade the payment system for laundry by using the Octopus payment system.

GHN: The Wednesday dinner with the Master is your idea. What did you think about it?

MBY: The Graduate House has close to 200 residents, and my goal is to get to know you all. While there are activities where I could talk to you such as the BBQ dinners and other large group activities, it still is difficult for me to get to know you all well. So I thought of inviting the residents in small groups to the master flat on a home environment for dinner. That’s what I wish all the residents feel – that they are part of this big family. During the dinner, residents will bring something to share, such as a photograph or story about themselves so my wife and I could get to know you more. At the same time, the small groups, who are living on the same floor, will also get to know each other. My wife and I always enjoy the sharing time and dinner gathering with the residents.

GHN: In view of the efforts of the GH management team to make GH an enjoyable place to live, what do you wish for the residents to do in return?

MBY: I hope the residents can cultivate a sense of being part of this big family among themselves since we are living under the same roof. I also wish they could identify the interest groups that they like, and participate in it. Work-Life Balance is important as it affects the well-being of individuals. In order to be productive at work, you need to set a healthy, balanced life. You set time for your research, but you also need to allot time in doing something else that you like, such as going for nature exploration, etc. And after doing so, I ensure you can do better research.
Dinner With Master on Wednesdays

Sarah Wang

Wednesday dinner with master was a series of gathering event for residents to dine together and know one another in a warm and home setting. Our dearest master Ben cordially invited all residents in small groups to his flat by floor and wing respectively. We brought photos and shared our stories with others during which we bonded and became better friends.
Orientation Talk and Welcoming Party on 23 September 2016
Innovation and Entrepreneurship Workshop on 6 October 2016

Sarah Wang

The workshop on innovation and entrepreneurship, co-organized by Graduate House and Graduate School, was successfully held at Wang Gungwu Lecture Hall on 6 October, 2016 (Thu).

We are honoured to have invited the following experts (Professor Andy Hor, Professor Anthony Yeh, Professor Paul Cheung, Dr Kelvin Yeung and Mr Hailson Yu) to share their experience and insights. Their sharing was very well received and aroused great interest amongst the attendees.
Ping Pong Competition and BBQ Night on 25 October 2016*

*This competition was organized by Table Tennis Interest Group of Graduate House.
Floor Gatherings on 2–3 November 2016
Sarah Wang

Floor gathering is a traditional event in GH in which floor mates interact with one another and offer feedback or suggestions about any aspect of GH. It provides an opportunity for residents to discuss and voice their opinions in harmonious atmosphere. Residents Committee will then forward their suggestions to the GH management team. This year, thanks for their excellent work, a new vending machine has been installed, and couches in each common rooms were renewed.
The Graduate House had invited Mr. Romeo Rodriguez Junior, a renowned magician from Japan, to host a magic show on 2 December 2016 (Friday) at Wang Gungwu Lecture Hall of Graduate House. About 180 students, staff and their guests enjoyed the unbelievable mental magic in a greatly exciting ambience.
Christmas Sing-along and BBQ Night on 16 December 2016

Sarah Wang

Residents enjoyed BBQ together at the beautiful garden Graduate House at Level P4. Then, sang along in P1-04 Common Room: Live Christmas carols in a warm lounge environment.

Our Artist-in-Residence Mr. Jonathan de la Cruz, played piano to lead us sing along. Residents also brought their favorite Christmas songs for singing along with fellow residents.
Graduate House Annual Christmas Party on 18 December 2016

Nicanor Guinto

Attended by more than 100 residents and staff, this year’s Graduate House (GH) Christmas Party was a blast with performances from various interest groups, fun games, and lucky draw, held at the Postgraduate Hub, December 18, 2016.

Dance and song numbers, instrument playing, and a play from the Dancing group, Yang Linchuan, Zhang Hui and company, Niu Sanyuan and company, Yang Yi and company, Spirituality group, Zhang Shengda and company, Hong Danyan and company, Ma Xin, Han Jianyu and company, and the Cantonese group, were among the entertainment that delighted attendees of the party.

The party was also attended by Master Ben Young, and Resident Fellow Jennifer Gao. It was organized by the GH Resident Committee, headed by Chen Junhao, with Yang LinChuan serving as overall program coordinator.
Graduate House 1st Singing Contest on 17 March 2017*

Third Prize Awardees:
Miss WANG, Jiao
Miss HE, Baoting
Mr. ZHANG, Shengda
Mr. LI, Zezhou
Miss HAN, Jianyu

Second Prize Awardees:
Miss YU, Cong
Mr. MA, Xin
Miss WU, Zhuoya

First Prize Awardee:
Mr. YANG, Linchuan

Best Performance
Miss WU, Zhuoya

Best Creativity
Mr. MA, Xin

Best Popularity
Mr. YANG, Linchuan

Best Dressing
Miss WANG, Jiao
Miss HE, Baoting

*This contest was organized by Music Interest Group of Graduate House.
Music Sharing Nite – Concert of Italian Romantic Songs on 24 March 2017
Graduate House 19th Anniversary High Table Dinner on 21 April 2017
Badminton Interest Group

Chaoqiang Jiang

The Graduate House Badminton Interest Group aims to develop a strong sense of interest and passion among our residents towards badminton. As a recreational interest group, players with all levels of different experience in the sport will be welcomed to join and participate in the scheduled session. Sometimes we will have the training session, we hope to train our new members to an acceptable skill level and to be able to enjoy the sport while having fun with their friends and staying fit.

Until now, we have around 100 members. The regular activity is held every week and all residents are encouraged to join this funny exercise. Apart from the plays in courts, we have many additional activities such as dinner after play, share talk, and shopping supermarket. These all give us more chances to know each other better and help someone lost in their research step out. Wish that through this multi-dimensional practice of badminton and communication skills, Our members would have more positive attitude and passion both in their research and daily life.
Do you certainly think Hong Kong is just a huge “shopping mall”? Are you really sure Hong Kong is just covered by “concrete forest”(石屎森林)? Probably you are partly wrong. As a modernized and bustling metropolitan in South China & Far East, land use for urban development or infrastructure in Hong Kong only occupies 30% of the total area. Highly-concentrated tall buildings give way to natural conservation, which means citizens can easily get access to such a pure landscape wherever and whenever without any human being’s effects.

As postgraduate students and also keen hikers at HKU, we find a way to balance our life of academic research and daily pleasure: go hiking. We aim to embrace the forever-green nature, to have a breath of the fresh air, to look at a bluer sky, and perhaps more importantly, to get rid of the mundane burden and gain an inner-peace. In all, we appreciate every outstanding beauty of our Mother Earth.
Spirituality Interest Group

Gorana Pogancev

Spirituality Interest group meets regularly once a week. Our meetings comprise of sharing our experiences as we all come from different countries and backgrounds which enables us to understand each other as well as the world around us better. It also sparks our creativity, stimulates our intellect and enriches our knowledge.

We also have a happiness jar in which each week write a happy memory from the last week.

In addition to that we organized a series of special events aiming to enrich our culture and understanding of the others. Some of the events had a special theme or a special guest speaker that helped us broaden our horizons.

Activities: Movie Night, Halloween Special, Racism or Tradition, Christmas Party Play, Valentine’s Day, Introduction to Buddihism, Easter Eggs Painting, etc.
Social Service Interest Group

Xin Ma and Printa Zhu

Social Service Group (SS Group) is composed of 2 subgroups in 2016-2017.

Social Service Club: Serving for the residents by providing activities.

Social Service Community: Serving for the society.

*The logos are designed by MA, Xin in 2016.
Card Game Interest Group

Xiaowan Tong and Danyan Hong

Werewolves competition against Morrison was held at Postgraduate Hub, Graduate House on 27th, November.
Dancing and Cheerleading Interest Group

Yiru Yu
Nature and Culture Explorer Interest Group
Haiyan Lai and Sarah Wang

The Nature & Culture Explorer Interest Group aims to provide residents with the opportunities to explore landscapes and cultural heritage sites hidden among the skyscrapers and malls in Hong Kong. The highlights of the group are to enjoy the beautiful natural sceneries and local foods while exploring the culture and history of Hong Kong.
Swimming and Diving Interest Group

Hui Zhang

Activities: Boat trip party and weekly swimming.
We hold several cooking and eating gatherings this year, which attracted many foodies to join. We spent happy time for shopping, preparing, cooking and eating. Everyone was involved in and everyone enjoyed the party. Only experienced the whole making process of dishes, people could cherish the delicious dishes more. Cooking is art, and eating stands for the positive and passionate attitude towards life. They help us release pressure and strengthen friendship. Come on. Bring your friends, join us!
Welcome to our pool game interest group! In our group, you will experience the fun of billiards and make new friends. What is more, under our instruction and communication, you will succeed to have an awesome trick-shot, get hold of the advanced skills of billiards and share the wonderful billiard video in the WeChat Moments!

So stay tuned!

(Group video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riNTgV7sOjo)
Cantonese Interest Group
Ziyu Ning and Geng Zhang

Cantonese interest group, organised by Ning Ziyun and Zhang Geng, aims to promote members’ Cantonese communicative capabilities and to facilitate their Cantonese cultural awareness.

This group is open to both residences living in Graduate House as well as other students and staff in the University of Hong Kong. Regular activities of this group include classroom learning and extracurricular activities like having local morning tea, experiencing Lan Kwai Fong, engaging in Christmas party and singing Cantonese songs.

There have been around 20 members attending these activities including one exchange staff from Beijing in medicine and several HKU students living outside Graduate House.
Health always comes before work. Our goal is to provide various options of fitness exercise and build a supportive community that encourages our residents to develop regular working-out routines.

What we are focally doing this year is yoga. It helps align body and mind, find balance between flexibility and strength, and gently release the tension and pressure. It is a way of living with acceptance. As most of us are drowned in our daily work, we believe doing yoga is one of the best ways to stay healthy, look good, and feel great!

In addition...

We collaborated with RC to get an elliptical machine placed in PI, so residents do not have to go to gyms to use it.

We also have a Nintendo Wii in the PI common room. Every resident can borrow it at the reception.

We are looking for...

Someone who enjoys fitness exercises;

Someone who tries to find a work-out buddy;

Someone who has practice experience and is willing to share with others.

STRENGTH WITHIN ♥ PROUD THROUGHOUT
Hip Hop Workshop

Jianyu Han

Hip hop workshop attracts ones who have strong desire to show off by expressing music in new style hiphop routines. We have attended all the performances in GH including Christmas party, high table dinner and singing contest. We build confidence, passion and skill. We are a unit, but with different freestyles. Every Saturday, training your body, enjoying the music and balancing your research life. Just as our team names described -- Wildfire, Almighty Panda!
DIY (Do It Yourself) is one of the best ways to entertain ourselves and express love to others. Woolen felt is a method of using the special needles to make notches along the shaft of the needle that catch fibers and tangle them with other fibers to produce felt, which is quite interesting and can help a lot in relieving stress.

Yumeng Guo and Gorana Pogancev
Since my move-in to the Graduate House (01 October 2016), memorable events have been several and frequent. As to my perception, the Graduate House is highly connected including alumni, distinguished scholars, and professional groups registered for their success. I believe this multidimensional connection of the house has created the opportunity to schedule, manage, and organize memorable events smoothly, which in turn helped the house organize a time of joy and relaxed environment for residents and the family within its cluster. Truly, most events are learnable and meaningfully established and also unique in the sense that much is not practiced in higher education institutions in the rest of the world. Thus, it seems worthwhile to feature the Graduate House at HKU at some length. First, we can model it for neatness and security. Second, it is a model for taking huge efforts to make residents relaxed, feel at home, and happy by creating thoughtful events for enjoyment and experience share. Third, it is a model in fostering interaction among residents so that they can introduce their cultures, learn from one another informally, and make use of their talents. Fourth, it is a model for transparency and democratic exercise because it encourages residents participate in decision making either through face-to-face discussions or through scientific data collection. In the subsequent paragraphs, I will try to highlight some of the memorable events I have experienced as a resident of the house.

Perceptibly, the graduate house is the driving force for any thoughtful event to come to the residents—clearly the majority have been planned by the graduate house itself and others organized through the established resident groups organized according to talents and interests. The events are many, but to mention some of them: Dinner Gathering events organized by Master Professor Ben Young (e.g., 26 October 2016). This event was marvelous because it was successful in getting residents know one another, relaxed, and make them feel at home. Additionally, this event was extended to Floor Gatherings (e.g., 2 November 2016) where self-introduction to
the assembly and the exposition of natural talents were mainstays. Many of the sort include: singing contests (e.g., 17 March 2017), discussion forum (e.g., 11 January 2017), and so on. Two big events remain prominent and widespread, however, the magic show led by the renowned Magician Mr. Romeo Rodriguez Junior (2 December 2016) and the Music Sharing Nite (24 March 2017). These two events were enjoyable as well broad – welcoming every interested family of the GH. Also, many resident groups have been engaged in creating an environment of learning and enjoyment, interaction and cultural exchange, share of experience and so on. Initiated by the GH and led by the cultural group of residents is the visit to Lantau-an historical, heritage, and cultural place. I believe that other successful groups do exist, but I am highly affiliated with the cultural group due to a successful and enjoyable event the group had organized.

A cultural tour to Lantau and Tai O was quite amazing in my life. The tour began early morning of 20 November 2016 and extended the entire day. I find Lantau a miraculous Historical, Heritage, and cultural site in Hong Kong, may be the most frequently visited area by local and international guests. Indeed, the way to Lantau is decorated by land escapement scenarios, natural forests, the vast and fast move-in to the holy place, beautiful cultural restaurants, the artifacts, and the temple and the creations clustering it make more attractive and enjoyable. It is a place that we can make our life happier and relaxed while rethinking the innovative power and spiritual strength of the long ancestors. This visit is unique and memorable for me. It stimulated me to promise for myself to witness Hong Kong is the home as well as an icon of historical, heritage, and cultural assets, and natural conservations.
Each culture in one district should be respected and learned since it has experienced hundreds, even thousands of years. And it can be seen as the reflex of people's lifestyle, sense of worth, as well as the natural environment. People around the world are getting closer and closer. It is of great importance to know different cultures to get along well with friends from different cultures. So we held this culture promotion activity to promote us GH residents closer and getting along well with each other.

And the activity includes three parts. Firstly, there is a PPT about our Chinese culture. Then, we have a short share of local culture. And the third part is a big game, to know more about the popular words and expressions.

This activity finally proves that we will know more about our neighbors and cultures, as well as different lifestyles happily through activities like this one. In other words, it is a good mode to promote people closer and closer.
An accordion workshop, led by Mr. John Shengda Zhang, was held on March 14, 2017 in P1 common room of Graduate House. Several music-lovers attended this activity and they really enjoyed it. John first introduced the basic structure of this instrument and emphasized the alignments of bass buttons for the left hand—a difficult part when learning the accordion at the beginning just because you cannot see it and can only feel it by blindly touching! Also, he illustrated the timbre switches for mimicking different musical instruments in both hand-sides, as well as some commonly-used marks in stave. Then examples of the advanced playing technique such as gliss, shake, circular movement of finger, tremolo, etc. were demonstrated. With learning some knowledge about the accordion, attendees could even try to practice with a smaller one and they all had fun by experiencing such a fantastic workshop.
In the Acapella workshop, our teachers talked about the basics of this art form. This workshop lasted for three sessions and is highly interactive and educational with residents actually practice singing together. The workshop later led to a performance at the GH annual High Table Dinner.
The Single Day Party was a night for house residents to mingle and socialize. At the night of Singles Day (November 11th), it was a great opportunity for young people to get away from academic life and relax themselves with games, food, and music. At the Halloween Party, residents showed up in costumes and enjoyed a wonderful night together. Scholars at day, ‘monsters’ at night, our participants looked truly stunning in their outfits and makeup.
Easter eggs are decorated eggs that are usually as gifts on the occasion of Easter or springtime celebration. Gathering to paint eggs and share the traditions related to various traditional festivals in different countries made this afternoon full of joy.
"Music of China" Workshop Series

Jiaqi Qu and Jiao Wang

The “Music of China” workshop series is organized by QU Jiaqi (pipa), WANG Jiao and LIU huiying (guzheng). The workshop not only features introductions to traditional Chinese musical instruments and music genres, but also includes demonstrations and hands-on practices. These highly interactive workshops are fun and educational, and have attracted many residents to attend.
Delicious Food Tasting and Beautiful Scenery Exploring of Yunnan

Yi Wen

The activity, Delicious Food Tasting and Beautiful Scenery Exploring of Yunnan, which has been held on April 10th by WEN Yi attracted more than 30 residents participated. During this activity, residents experienced different style of dinner and tasted special food of Yunnan including gammons, sausages, tamarind, Danqing cake, stewed rice with photos and gams, pineapple rice, fungus of Dai and other special foods of Yunnan. After the dinner, WEN Yi gave a presentation about the famous tourist attractions of Yunnan and the minority cultures of these places such as the Kunming, Dali, Lijiang, and Xishuangbanna. Residents through their vision, audition and gustation to know Yunnan. This activity successfully promoted the culture exchange and communication between the residents and let the students from other parts of world know more about China.