

香港浸會大學教職員工會
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

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NEWSLETTER (153)

Series on President's Tenure
An Open Letter to the Council Chairman
Evaluation of the President Must be Impartial, Rigorous and
Scientific

June 7, 2006

Dear Mr. Moses Cheng,

We write to inform you that we have published two newsletters to all our colleagues, expressing concern whether the Council would be impartial, fair and rigorous in evaluating Professor Ng's performance as President before deciding to renew his contract or not. Professor H. K. Chang, President of the City University of Hong Kong, recently wrote to all his colleagues about what he thinks of evaluating the University's senior management. A Union member has sent us a copy, which we enclose for your reference (See the Appendix). After reading it carefully, we believe there are valuable lessons to be learnt from President Chang in the following aspects:

1. President Chang appreciates the value of evaluating senior staff by all staff members. He said some forms of opinion survey on management's performance can provide useful information to help the University move forward.
2. President Chang believes that such a survey should be done on a regular basis if proven useful.
3. The President opines that such kind of evaluation must be a serious and rigorous undertaking. To put his idea into practice, he would invite representatives from all staff associations and organizations to participate in designing the survey.

By adopting a serious, open and collegial attitude in handling the performance of the senior management, President Chang has set a shining example of credible leadership with accountability. We thus write to urge you to halt the ongoing exercise of evaluating our President and heed President Chang's advice by re-launching it with much-needed improvements. The evaluation should be based on a survey designed carefully and administered properly. Participants should be scientifically sampled and well informed of the survey's objectives, the methodology to be adopted, the process and the ultimate use of the results. Otherwise, the appraisal might not be seen as being administered in an open, fair, collegial and therefore acceptable manner. If the President's contract is eventually renewed under such circumstances, many staff members would inevitably feel that the process has been completed in a Pandora's Box, in which unscrupulous deals might have taken place and remained unchecked.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Executive Committee,
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union.

Appendix

Letter to Dr John Tse, Chairman of Staff Association

Dear Dr Tse,

This is a delayed response to a message in the E-mail Broadcast System (EBS) sent by the Staff Association (SA) on 6 March 2006, announcing that the SA plans to conduct an "Annual Appraisal Scheme" for the Senior Management Staff of the University. (Because I did not wish to see the discussion of this issue coincide with the recent election of a staff representative to the Search Committee. In this regard, I offer you my congratulations.) As the matter raised in the SA's EBS is of concern to all staff members, I am certain that you would not mind me also using the EBS to communicate with you.

While there have not been enough details given by the SA about the aims, the methodology, the process and the ultimate use of the results of the Scheme, I appreciate the SA's intention to collect and reflect staff's views on the University management's performance and achievements, with an objective to help the University to develop further.

Any appraisal scheme must be a serious and rigorous undertaking and I would like to stress that the University has already in place an established system of appraisal schemes to evaluate all staff members, including senior staff, to enable them to improve continuously. On the other hand, I believe that some form of opinion survey on the management's performance can provide useful information to help the University move forward. I thus have discussed the matter with my senior colleagues, and we agreed that the University should commission an independent professional agent within the next month or so to design and conduct an opinion survey on the management's performance. If proven useful, the survey will be done on a regular basis.

Any such survey must be carefully designed and properly administered in an open, fair and collegial manner in order for it to be useful. Staff members who are invited to participate must be well informed of the aims of the survey, the methodology to be adopted, the process and the ultimate use of the results. There should be clearly stipulated and appropriate criteria for scoring, and staff members must be shown clearly beforehand what different scores under those criteria mean, so that the scores cast will be credible and reliable. The professional agent will be charged with the important task of devising a robust and scientific system to generate results that are credible and reliable.

The management would want to solicit suggestions from staff bodies in the design of the system. Since the SA has already spent considerable efforts in formulating ideas in this aspect, I think a meeting between us to discuss the matter in more detail will be beneficial. I will therefore ask my assistant to arrange for such a meeting. The Staff Consultative Committees will also be involved in the design of such a survey.

With your support, I have confidence that the University will continue to make progress in its mission.

H K Chang

President and University Professor

21 March 2006