

This autumn is truly a season of celebration for Macao, as the year 2009 marks the 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 10th anniversary of Macao's handover. It is also the year during which a new administration for the Macao SAR Government will be established. If the past decade has been an era of glittering glory for Macao Polytechnic Institute as it has grown along with the SAR, its progress over the past academic year has been particularly significant.

The foremost mission of any institution of higher learning is to offer quality teaching to its students. The quest for quality teaching has always been at the core of each of MPI's programmes. This emphasis on high academic standards has won wide recognition both locally and in the neighbouring region, as well as from overseas, with the number of students applying for admission to MPI growing steadily year on year. As was reported in the *Macao Daily News* of June 15th, 2009, the number of applicants for MPI's programmes has not fallen, despite a decline in the number of high school graduates this year. The report also noted that among this year's local secondary school graduates over 63% have chosen to apply to MPI, with the total number of local applicants topping 6,200. So we are proud to be able to say that MPI has become the preferred choice for the majority of our secondary school graduates and young people for several consecutive years. Well-equipped with professional skills and general knowledge, as well as an earnest attitude toward work and people, MPI graduates are well-known for their professional skills and wide knowledge.

The guiding principle for MPI at its inception was "teaching as the major task, complemented by research". After many years of effort, Macao Polytechnic Institute has established a contingent of high-quality teaching staff, with 43% of its current staff holding PhD degrees. With the rise of the Institute's academic standing and the steady growth of its research output, a decision was taken to make a strategic transition from 2008 onward, amending the Institute's guiding principle to "teaching and research playing an equal part", in order to further enhance the quality of our teaching and research. I have remarked on various occasions that, as a public tertiary education institution, MPI must adapt itself to the changing realities. The reality is that, in tandem with Macao's rapid economic expansion, various other cultural undertakings have also prospered in the territory, and this calls for higher standards in academic research, not only to provide teaching and training better suited to the specific needs of the community, but also to provide policy recommendations and expert advice for the Macao SAR Government.

In just one year's time, this strategic transition has achieved some notable successes. Under the new guiding principle, research at MPI has gained some impressive momentum, whether in the forms of monographs, journal papers, or research projects. In the academic year 2008/2009, there were a total of 134 papers published by MPI staff, among which 23 papers were published in journals or proceedings included in the SCI, SSCI, EI Citation Indexes, and 25 in key journals in Mainland China. At the time of writing this preface, the results of the Second Excellent Achievement Prize in Humanities and Social Sciences of Macao had just been announced. 50 pieces of research won awards, of which 5 were first class, 9 second class and 10 third class awards for monographs; 5 first class, 9 second class and 12 third class awards for research papers. 4 of the total 5 first class awards for monographs went to MPI staff, including Professor Wang Wuyi's *Analysis of the Regime of the Liberalisation of Macao's Gaming Franchise*, Professor Li Changsen's *The Formation and Development of Macanese in the Ming-Qing Period*, Dr. Ieng Weng Fat's (part-time academic staff) *Macao Urban Architecture during the Ming and Qing Period*, and Professor Ieong Wan Chong's (in collaboration with Dr. Huang Hongzhao and Dr. Chong Man Weng) *Building a City of Culture – On How to Utilise its Cultural Advantages and Develop a Cultural Industry in Macao*. With second and third class awards included, MPI staff won 14 awards in total, accounting for 28% of the total awards of this event.

To be successful, an institution of higher learning must never lose touch with reality. It should always keep its eyes open to the outside world and keep abreast of general trends in higher education both at home and abroad. In the broad context of globalization, the internationalisation of higher education has become an overwhelming trend and any tertiary institution which aims to be top-class must follow this trend. Despite its unique characteristics, there exists a considerable gap between Macao's higher education and that of world-class standards, a fact not to be ignored. To catch up with the top league from what is an undoubtedly disadvantaged position, we must conscientiously align ourselves with the most advanced international standards, and draw on the strengths of the elite. With this in mind we have tried our best to improve upon this situation, through various activities such as organising international symposia and conducting exchanges and cooperation with prestigious universities from around the world. A number of world-renowned figures, such as former US Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger, and former Foreign Minister of the PRC, Professor Li Zhaoxing, were invited to be keynote speakers at the International Conference on "China's Peaceful Development: Opportunities and Challenges". They were also awarded the title of honorary professors of MPI. The "Macao Local Record" project was also launched, marking a significant milestone in the cultural development of Macao. Joint Master's degree programmes with institutions such as Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal, have been progressing smoothly. Exchanges and cooperation of such a kind are now well under way, boosting MPI's academic standing and influence abroad. MPI has been taking giant strides along its path of developing through quality and character.

The future of MPI is a vista of limitless promise. In the coming academic year, MPI campus facilities will be scaled up very substantially with the completion of the new academic building. A number of on-going measures will continue to be carried out, and new measures implemented to further enhance MPI's academic standing through establishing or updating a whole set of regulations on incentives for quality teaching and research. Through vigorous support and guidance, the students will be encouraged to work diligently on their studies and live a fruitful college life. Being bold in innovation but with a sense of proportion the Institute will continue to work diligently under the guidelines of the SAR Government, and the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture in particular, and to draw upon the experiences of other universities both locally and abroad, while actively exploring its own path of development to nurture talented students and promote teaching and research for Macao's prosperity.

Lei Heong lok
President of Macao Polytechnic Institute