Higher education plays a significant role in enhancing the competitiveness of a city or country and universities around the world have been in a state of transformation to meet the needs of the 21st century. In an increasingly globalised world and knowledge-based economy, individual nations have seen it essential to nurture local talents and attract foreign expertise to increase the competitiveness of the labour force. As well as spending more on higher education, some countries have aspired to attract world-class universities. Singapore has been at the forefront of the competition for talent in a bid to become an education hub; its government has invited reputable foreign universities such as John Hopkins University, INSEAD, and the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, to establish a local presence - with varying degrees of success. In fact the Booth School of Business has just moved its Asia campus to Hong Kong after more than 13 years in Singapore.

In September, the World Economic Forum (WEF) released the latest Global Competitiveness Report, which uses 12 key pillars to assess the health of national economies. Out of 144 nations, Hong Kong ranks seventh, unchanged from the previous year. It tops the infrastructure pillar, reflecting the outstanding quality of transport facilities. Hong Kong also scores highest in financial market development, due to high levels of efficiency, trust, and stability within the system. As one of the most open economies in the world, Hong Kong ranks highly in efficiency of goods and labour markets. But the territory scores lower in higher education and training, and also innovation, ranked 22th and 26th respectively. Singapore also performs extremely well, consistently ranked second for the past four consecutive years. Just like Hong Kong, Singapore is near the top in the goods and labour market efficiency and financial market development. But Singapore’s competitiveness is enhanced by a strong focus on education, and the country also scores highly for higher education and training.

There are three issues regarding how higher education in Hong Kong can enhance the competitiveness of the talent pool.

First issue: how can the higher education sector help attract foreign talents? In recent years Hong Kong universities have worked hard to recruit students from China, the region and further afield in the West, in a bid to internationalise. This recruitment drive, in line with a government quota requiring 20 percent non-local students in order to foster diversity on campus, helps promote cross-cultural awareness. With Hong Kong’s unique East-meet-West character and the strong international reputation of our universities, Hong Kong universities have been quite successful to recruit many students from the Mainland and abroad. If these international students stay on after graduation, they are a welcome addition to the labor force.

As well as undergraduate and postgraduate research programs, taught postgraduate
In the 21st century, the paradigm of increasingly knowledge-based workplaces in a dynamic, globalised society and an education system are required to equip students with the skills to navigate the challenges of a globalised world?

Second issue: how should we train talents to be competitive in a globalised world?

Universities now need to equip students with the skills to navigate the challenges of a dynamic, globalised society and an increasingly knowledge-based workplace. In the 21st century, the paradigm of “lifetime employment” has shifted to “lifetime employability”, with a focus on developing generic, adaptable skills. It is no longer sufficient to teach specialised knowledge only. In order for our students to be life-long contributors to society, we need to broaden their education. They need exposure to a wider range of knowledge, from culture, history, science, engineering, through to business, to gain a greater understanding of the individual’s role in society. Since 2012, all of Hong Kong universities provide a four-year undergraduate program which helps to build a solid foundation of general knowledge. Students also need to become critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, and good team players, rather than merely becoming academically competent. This is why we need to redesign our curriculum and incorporate a variety of team projects and experiential learning. Our students also need to build “good character” based upon ethical and moral behaviors, attitudes and values to face an increasingly challenging world. This character building helps students to be more adaptable and resilient in their work environment, and to be a citizen of high moral standing.

Third issue: what’s the role of the university within innovation in Hong Kong?

More than most countries, Hong Kong depends on its knowledge economy as it has no natural resources and thrives upon the resources and ideas of its people. However, while Hong Kong enjoys a good rule of law, an open economy, and an efficient capital market, it still lags in terms of innovation - ranked only 20th in the WEF competitiveness report. Hong Kong universities have an important role to play here – they are places for blue-skies and applied thinking, and many are internationally renowned for the quality of their research. Universities are places where faculty and students can enjoy their natural curiosity and imagination, ask the big questions and search for the answers. Discoveries and inventions may be accidental and unpredictable, but come from persistent efforts of researchers who are not necessarily driven by commercial goals. Curiously, a significant amount of research and development (R&D) spending in Hong Kong occurs within the higher education sector. But this isn’t necessarily good news; it implies that the private sector is not investing enough. Compared with many developed countries, Hong Kong ranks quite low in the ratio of R&D expenditure to GDP – less than one percent compared to Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea, which have ratios between three to 3.5 percent. In all these economies, the major driver is the private sector rather than the government. In Hong Kong, the ratio of public to private R&D expenditure is about 60:40 – in others it is closer to 30:70. This situation is far from ideal. Universities produce many PhD graduates, but because of a lack of larger-scale R&D projects, these researchers, many of them scientists and engineers, tend to leave Hong Kong. Recently Hong Kong universities have seized the initiative to contribute more to knowledge creation and innovation. They are collaborating with private corporations on big-scale research projects, building infrastructure and networks to enable the transfer of technology, and creating entrepreneurship platforms for faculty and students. We will start to see a change of the environment and mindset, although more collaboration between the higher education sector, the private sector, and the government will be needed.

It’s clear that higher education is vital in Hong Kong’s aspirations to meet and overtake the competition in the 21st century. Hong Kong has certain advantages, not least in the rule of law, the quality of the institutions, the open economy and efficient infrastructure. But these will mean nothing if we don’t have a sufficient and competitive labour force. To maintain our edge, we need to continue to invest into the future, in areas such as education, research and development, and human capital. Higher education has an important role in this transformation, by training broad-minded and skilled professionals to meet the changing needs of the economy, by recruiting outstanding faculty and students from abroad, and by...
等教育是一個城市或地區提升競爭力的重要因素，而世界各\n地的大學都正在轉型，以迎合廿一世紀的需要。隨著世界經\n濟全球化及跨知識型經濟，個別國家認為培育本地人才及吸引海外學生才是在人力資源\n方面增加競爭力的關鍵。除了增加高等教育的\n投資外，部分地區亦渴望吸引世界各地的大\n學在當地設立分校。新加坡亦志在成為教育\n樞紐，一直不遺餘力地爭奪人才，而當地政\n府在這方面亦已取得相當的成功，包括成功\n爭取的哈佛肯登大學、歐洲工商管理學院及\n芝加哥大學布思商學院等國際一流學府進\n駐當地設立分校。事實上，在新加坡設立分\n校逾十三年的芝加哥大學布思商學院，最近\n才把其亞洲分校遷到香港。

今年九月，世界經濟論壇（WEF）发表了最\n新的《全球競爭力報告》，以廿三個主要競\n爭力因素作為評估各地區綜合競爭力的\n指標。在一百四十個地區當中，香港排名第二\n位，排名與去年相同。香港在基礎設施方\n面排名榜首，反映本地的交通及運輸配套設\n施十分完善；在金融市場發展方面亦排名\n第一，主要原因包括本港在效率和穩定可靠\n性方面的表現均非常突出。作為全球其中一個\n最開放的經濟體系之一，香港在商品及勞工市場效率\n方面的評分亦相當高。然而香港在高等教育\n、人才培訓及創新科技方面的評分則比較\n低，分別只排名第二十二及二十六位。反\n觀新加坡的表現卻十分出色。已連續四隄佔全\n球第二位，跟香港一樣，新加坡在貿易及勞工\n市場效率，以及金融市場發展方面亦取得\n接近滿分。由於新加坡近年大力發展教育，\n在高等教育和人才培訓方面均獲得出色的\n評分，令競爭力如虎添翼。

我們藉下列三個議題探討有關香港高等教育\n機構如何增強人才競爭力：

議題一：高等教育界如何吸引海外人才？

近年本港各大學致力推行國際化，善用政府\n容許大學招收百分之二十五本地學生的配\n額，積極招攬來自中國內地、亞洲區及歐美\n國家的學生，以促進校園多元化和跨文化\n認同。香港擁有中西兼善的獨特優勢，而我\n們的大學亦蜚聲國際，因此本港不少高等學\n府在延攬中國內地及海外學生方面一直十分\n成功。若這些國際學生在畢業後留港工作，\n肯定能為我們的勞動力增添生力軍。

除了學生及研究生課程外，研究生修課式\n課程亦是大學課程的重要一環，這些課程\n較短，往往只有一至兩年。大部分地區的研\n究生課程設置在語文及實務的發展上，有\n時亦會設立研究計劃，以確保學生得到足\n夠的指導。而海外的研究生課程則較為靈\n活，學員可以在不同的大學中選修課程，\n有時還會設立跨學科的課程，以擴展學員的\n知識和發展。

議題二：在這個全球化世代中，我們應如何培\n養人才以增強競爭力？

在這個瞬息萬變的全球社會化和日益以知識\n為基礎的職場中，大學必須教授學生所需的\n技能，以協助他們克服種種挑戰。在廿一世\n紀，以往「終身僱佣」已經成為「終身就\n業能力」所取代。只是教授專門知識已經不\n再足夠，更重要的是協助學生掌握適應性\n技能。為了讓我們的學生能夠終身貢獻社\n會，我們需要擴闊他們的學習領域，學生需\n要接觸更廣泛的知識，從文化、歷史、科學\n、工程以至商業，務求更加了解每個在社\n會中角色。本港所有大學二零一二年實\n行四年制學士學位課程，有助建立更緊密\n的通識教育基礎。大學學生在業界則遠\n遠沒有實踐這樣的理念。大學應繼續培養\n我們的學生在業界及社會的發展，而不僅限\n於學術領域。大學學生需要將所學應用於\n實踐，並且在業界中有所貢獻，成為社會的\n重要組成部分。

香港要在廿一世紀競爭激烈的環境中佔一\n席位，高等教育謂是其中關鍵，香港是具本\n身的優勢，包括法治、高素質的高等教育\n及強大的研究及開發能力。然而，我們面\n臨著多方面的挑戰，包括國際化的競爭、\n社會的快速變化及技術的進步。香港的商\n業和政治界需要共同應對這些挑戰，以保\n持香港的競爭力。

議題三：大學在本港創新科技發展中能發揮\n什麼作用？

香港Bits和數據產業的發展是其中一個重\n要的領域。大學作為培養創新人才的重\n要基地，應積極參與這些領域的發展，以\n培育具備實戰經驗的培養，進而為香港的\n創新科技事業作出貢獻。