

## Beijing Forum 2019 Liberal Education Through College: World's Experience and Asian Experience (I) & (II)

On the morning of November 2nd, the panel session “Liberal Education Through College: World's Experience and Asian Experience” was inaugurated at Meeting Room M11, Stanford Center, Peking University. The first section of this panel comprised self-introductions of the panelists and was hosted by Sun Feiyu, Vice Dean of Yuanpei College, PKU.

Prof. Wu Yanhong first gave a brief introduction to the flourishing Yuanpei College, which focuses on the establishment of residential college and interdisciplinary subjects.

Then Prof. Robert Henderson talked about Cambridge University. Founded in 1209, Cambridge is a comprehensive research college featuring research-active academic staff in great numbers. The threshold for students entering Cambridge is very high.

Prof. Christopher Wild, from Chicago University, underlined that his school has no arts and sciences structure, but has 4 divisions categorized instead according to academic fields. Chicago University's development is now reflected by a wide range of metrics.

Vassar College's Robert Rebelein gave a brief but comprehensive view of his college, a relatively small but well-organized liberal arts school.

Cynthia Bansak, from St. Lawrence University, presented an overall image of the her university's history, subject features, faculty-student ratio, etc.

Marc Tomljanovich talked about Drew University, located on the east coast of USA, which is a liberal arts college underlining experiential learning.

Cheng Baoyan, from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, emphasized that her school is focused on Asian programs, and its unique geographical and historical backgrounds and cultural diversity all makes for it becoming a featured learning spot.

Umemori Naoyuki, from Waseda University, talked about its history at first. Then he mentioned a great many of Waseda University's preeminent alumni and the college's large scale of

international students, etc.

Cho Jun-Hee, from Seoul National University, introduced this newly-founded but well-developed university. Its College of Liberal Studies has the slogan ‘Crossing boundaries, Embracing the future’. The college provides student mentoring, independent research and student-designed majors.

Wong Wing Shing, from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, put forward that the university is a comprehensive research university, with colleges playing a key role in its structure.

Li Donghui, from Lingnan University, also a liberal arts university, showed that the university had designed broad-based curricula for learners. There are also more credits for free electives. Its Integrated Learning Programme is an eye-catching feature, which would be discussed in detail in the school’s next representatives talk.

Xie Shi, from Sun Yat-sen University’s Boya College, a liberal arts college, showed that this college had been dedicated to classical liberal education for 10 years. He also explained the students’ core courses to major courses development trajectory in his college.

The second part of the session, named as “Residential College: Constitution and Theory”, was hosted by Ms. Li Donghui. Five representatives shared their opinions on this topic.

The first scholar talking to everyone was Robert Henderson from Emmanuel College, Cambridge University. With the topic “How a 13th Century Concept Works in the 21st Century”, he began his lecture talking about Cambridge’s history. The university aimed at creating an academic structure for scholars from various parts of the country, most of whom were contradictory to Church of England. Thus, Cambridge was outside the mainstream at first, focusing on independent management. Students chose a scholar to follow and received education in the according field of academics. The concept of accommodating college was established from scratch, with the university’s governance regarded as free and democratic. The faculty organized teaching programmes in terms of subjects. Colleges, which own their tailored regulation, offered customized tutoring for students and streamlined small-scale academic institutions. Nowadays, however, all colleges were not founded by professional pundits, Robinson College which was established by a businessman and philanthropist taken as an example.

The second orator was Luis Inoa from Vassar College. His speech was entitled “To Master the Art of Living Cooperatively”. He introduced the motif by putting forward his own and family experiences, and from that, he drew the conclusion that liberal arts education gained its transition through the development of society. By citing an article, he held the opinion that the thought of simply regarding university education as “practical and professional” has become outmoded. One of the aims of liberal arts education should be remodeling thoughts with the aid of critical thinking. He then showed a survey, in which the conclusion was reached that students in a residential college could achieve higher grades and have better mental health. He then recommended two online programmes CWI and ACUHO-I. In conclusion, he stressed that the concepts of residential college and liberal arts education ought to be a global idea.

Following the idea of residential college, Prof. Wong Wing Shing presented a talk on “The Role of College in a Publicly Funded Research University”. He made a deep thought into the problem of resources facing contemporary public universities by reflecting on the function of university in students’ overall development. He showed his university as an example. In the Chinese University of Hong Kong, each student, academic staff and administration staff are belonged to both an academic department and a college. There exists competition between colleges, and the number of students in each college are averaged. The aims of college could be summarized as the following three slogans: 1. Home away from home, following this the university holds events including communal dining and social gathering. 2. Haven for educational studies, this could be made real by holding experiencing programmes and worldwide “term break” exposing students to travels and training. 3. No student is an island, for this, interaction between tutors and students, or seniors and freshmen, were popular in this university. He concluded that his college was in its early stage and looking forward to better development.

The next scholar who presented his ideas was Jonathan J. Fong from Lingnan University, Hong Kong. As to Hong Kong’s trait of metropolis and high living cost, Lingnan Univ. focused on practical education intended to channel brains to outstanding enterprises. Therefore, the university had its own featured leadership courses. Another feature is its strong emphasis on accommodation regulation. 2 year’s residence at school was compulsory, and most students at Lingnan experienced a full 4-year hostel living, with free choice of roommates and dormitories. Students could feel the “true” self-regulated life through this. Finally, he introduced the programmes of Integrated Learning

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Programme and Lingnan Language Enhancement Initiative. Language, entrepreneurship, leadership and cross-cultural events were included in these two programmes.

The fifth and final speaker was Sun Feiyu from Yuanpei College, Peking University (PKU). His speech, named “Challenges and Responses of Yuanpei College” could be viewed as an epitome of liberal arts education’s predicaments in China. Classes and labs are daily life of a student in PKU, but what typical life is students in the university? He concluded the dilemma as a tension between research and liberal education, originated from the pressure universities are facing nowadays from “ranking”. However, the cultivation of a person cannot be measured by rankings. In Yuanpei College, students were lonely and busy due to classes and separate majors with roommates. Thus, lack of communication became common, and it was called upon that students stop and ponder on themselves, their friends and society. The response of Yuanpei College as to these lied in explanation on what liberal arts education is. For this, Yuanpei College encouraged seminars, established supervisor and tutorial systems, set up self-management facilities like Students’ Studies Organization, and equipped the college with a psychological centre. “Want students to be happy” is the aim of both students and the college.