

Donations to UMDF Reach the MOP 280 Million Mark

UMDF's development relies on alumni's support

The University of Macau Development Foundation (UMDF) is not the first foundation established for the purpose of support the development of a university. What sets UMDF apart, however, is the fact that it received donations of over MOP 280 million within only a few months of its establishment. Dr. Tse Chi Wai, a co-founder of the foundation and Chair of the University Council (UC) of the University of Macau (UM), said that such impressive achievements were partly due to the unprecedented opportunity brought by the new campus and partly due to the great support from the SAR government, the society, and UM staff. The enthusiastic response shows the society's commitment to support the university's objective of becoming a world-class university. Dr. Tse also expressed hope that more Macao residents, UM alumni in particular, can donate to UMDF to support the sustainable development of UM.

Lack of financial autonomy due to the need to follow the government's accounting systems.

Dr. Tse said that the idea of establishing UMDF emerged in 2006. In that year UM established the new Charter of the University of Macau after the Legislative Assembly of Macao SAR adopted the Judicial Regime of the University of Macau. When proposing the revision of the judicial regime of UM, the university hoped to gain autonomy in academic, administrative and financial affairs. After adoption of the new judicial regime, however, UM only gained autonomy in the first two areas, with financial affairs still subject to the government's accounting rules and regulations because the university's operation was supported by government funds.

Dr. Tse said the fact that the university differed from ordinary government departments in operation but had to follow the government's accounting systems complicated financial procedures. He further added that the government's financial budgets were made on an annual basis, so when there was a budget surplus, the surplus funds had to be handed back to the government instead of being carried forward to the next year, which caused a lack of flexibility in formulating

development plans for the university and hindered the university's pursuit of becoming a modern university that meets international standards.

After completing the restructuring of UC on 1 September 2006, UC members met with the then-Chief Executive of Macao SAR Mr. Edmund Ho Hau Wah and discussed relevant issues with him. Dr. Tse said that while Mr. Ho agreed that UM lacked flexibility in the management of its financial affairs, he also said that it was very difficult to grant UM full autonomy in financial affairs due to the fact that the university's operation was supported by government funds. It was out of a desire to resolve such a dilemma that the idea of establishing a foundation to support UM's development was floated.

Registering UMDF as a private organization to ensure financial autonomy

Dr. Tse said that UC members held thorough discussions and reached a consensus on the need to establish a foundation, but some UC members voiced concerns that despite legal provisions that granted UM the right to accept donations from individuals and organizations, a foundation affiliated with the university would still have no autonomy in the operation of its funds, because funds raised by the foundation would still be deemed as part of the government funds, and if that was the case, the foundation would lose its meaning of existence. Due to such concerns, finally the decision was made that UMDF should be registered as a private organization in the name of four individuals, namely Dr. Stanley Ho, Dr. Tse Chi Wai, Mr. Wong Chong Fat, and Mr. Lam Kam Seng.

Dr. Tse said that in order for the foundation to be registered, a certain amount of capital had to be raised. To solve this problem, those who initiated this project met with Mr. Edmund Ho. Finally Mr. Ho persuaded several people to make a total donation of MOP 5 million, which served as the registered capital. Other than that, Mr. Edmund Ho also successfully obtained the commitment from some dignitaries to donate to the foundation even before its establishment. UMDF was formally established on 7 December 2009, and thanks to Mr. Edmund Ho's effort, the foundation was already in possession of over MOP 10 million on its establishment day. Recalling the original objective of establishing UMDF, Dr. Tse said that it was simply for the purpose of helping the university gain autonomy in financial affairs. Last year came the turning point for UM when the Central Government decided to lease a piece of land on Hengqin Island to the university for the construction of its new campus. After Rector Wei Zhao took up office, he set ambitious new goals for

the university. These positive changes have prompted UMDF to revise its mission from securing financial autonomy for the university into providing practical support for the university's sustainable development.

Seeking donations to support the development of residential colleges

Dr. Tse said that it's only been several months since UMDF's establishment, but already the foundation has received a total of MOP 280 million in donations. He said such impressive achievements were partly due to the unprecedented opportunity brought by the new campus and partly due to the great support from the SAR government, the society, and UM staff. UMDF was founded a few months after the Central Government decided to grant Macao SAR Government the jurisdiction over the new campus site upon its completion. Such good timing, combined with the university's identification of an ambitious new goal of becoming a world-class university which conforms to President Hu Jintao's expectations conveyed at the groundbreaking ceremony, earned the recognition and support from the community and enabled UMDF to raise large amounts of donations within a short period of time.

Of course those in charge of the foundation should also be credited with making the fundraising campaigns successful. Dr. Tse said that according to the master plan for the new campus, ten residential colleges would be built on the new campus, so they worked hard to try to persuade potential benefactors to support the development of these residential colleges. However, the first big donation to the foundation, which was made by the Wu Yee Sun Charitable Foundation Limited (WYSCFL), was not for the residential colleges. Dr. Tse said that before they approached the management personnel of WYSCFL, WYSCFL had already made a donation to the Chinese University of Hong Kong for a residential college, so it had no plan to donate to another tertiary institution in the near future. However, knowing that WYSCFL had the tradition of supporting the educational cause, Dr. Tse didn't give up and went to great lengths to try to persuade WYSCFL to donate to the central library—the most important landmark building on the new UM campus. Finally WYSCFL agreed to donate HKD 150 million to UMDF. Afterwards, with the effort of Dr. Tse and UM Vice Rector (Administration) Dr. Alex Lai, Dr. Stanley Ho, Lui Che Woo Foundation Limited, Henry Fok Foundation, and Ms. Susana Chou each donated MOP 30 million to UMDF to support the development of four residential colleges.

For world-renowned universities alumni donations account for over 40% of the total annual donations

Dr. Tse said that many world-renowned universities such as Harvard, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford all have such foundations that carry out fundraising campaigns on a yearly basis to support their universities' development, and UMDF will play a similar role. The availability of abundant financial resources does not mean that UM can squander the money. Every avos should be used for the intended purposes. When UM earns wider recognition, the foundation will be able to attract more donations, which will in turn propel the university's further development. Indeed, the development of the foundation and the development of the university are closely interrelated and mutually complementary.

The support from society and UM alumni is essential for the sustainable development of UMDF. Dr. Tse said that for many world-renowned universities, small donations from alumni account for over 40% of the total donations they receive every year, which is testament to the crucial role of alumni support. It has been less than 30 years since UM' s foundation. However, many middle- and senior-level management personnel working in enterprises and government departments are UM alumni who have the ability to make small donations to UM. As far as ordinary residents are concerned, Dr. Tse said he believes that as long as UM works hard to attain constant improvement, the residents will follow the example of existing benefactors and support UM within their financial means.