



Mr Li addresses the students of Shantou University (STU), directly tackling a topsy-turvy world.

Mr Li Ka-shing, speaking at STU's commencement ceremony this year, tackled directly into the storm of contradictions that face mankind in the 21st century. Unparalleled opportunities appeared alongside injustice and conflict.

STU's over 2,700 graduates came to hear from two big men at their commencement – Mr Li and Yao Ming, founder of the Yao Foundation and National Basketball Association (NBA) legend. Mr Li is, of course, a perennial favourite and supporter of the school; the Li Ka Shing Foundation donations to Shantou University are approaching the HKD8 billion mark (to be reached in 2018). Mr Yao is aligned with Mr Li's values, and exhorted students to take responsibility for their lives and to have clear goals.

THIS WON'T BE EASY

Mr Li spoke directly to the students, but his speech was expansive in view, addressing directly the forces buffeting the world environment. He put it straight to the students, "Our world is a troubled place: unsustainable, unequal, unjust and conflicted." He emphasised that "everything is unpredictable". Mental inertness has "spawned misguided strategies and policies". Turning to the Greek classics, he warned of this lethargy of the mind leading to a "Sisyphean future, a future where our goals are forever out of our reach".

Even Icarus, who flew too close to the sun, got a nod as Mr Li castigated those who deployed vision without solution just to satisfy their ambitions. The worldly students and academics of STU would not have to stretch far to see the global impact of high-flying but "toxic" leaders of the type alluded to by Mr Li.

A BRIGHTER WAY

Rather than let the darkness of the world dampen spirits, Mr Li challenged the graduates to rise above it; to use the fear as a tool to motivate them to become who they want to be. This self-actualisation would enable them to become fearless in solving the problems of the world with their own vision.

While it may be true that "a climate of sociopolitical and economic uncertainty, a myriad of technological forces surge forward into every corner of life," Mr Li believes that the students of STU have the means – indeed, the responsibility – "to reimagine and reshape established models and conventions" that drive our world. The uncertainty, the change, is not to be feared, but harnessed and directed for good.

For students to make that happen, they need to understand the fundamental and



(Left) Virtual hospital, real benefits: Mr Li tours the Medical School’s cutting-edge Virtual Hospital and meets STU students.
 (Above) Big men, big hearts: Li Ka-shing and Yao Ming have both committed to changing the world for the better.

sometimes contradictory forces that must be mastered for humanity’s advancement. He describes a trinity of Ts – Technology, Talent and Tolerance – that must be balanced.

“Technology is the cornerstone of economic progress. Talent is the engine that powers productivity. Tolerance is

“Our world is a troubled place: unsustainable, unequal, unjust and conflicted.”

Mr Li Ka-shing

the edge that spurs competitiveness and equity. Together this is the trinity that forms the basis for innovation.”

Beyond understanding abstract but real forces driving civilisation’s advance or collapse, students also need to look within.

CHANGE STARTS WITHIN

Creativity and flexibility in thinking are a must for future leaders. Leaders need to make smarter, faster and better decisions that come from a passion for learning. That passion instils a sense of wonder and fosters intellectual growth. This is what is needed to find solutions that can bring real vision to life.

Mr Li’s success clearly shows the results of providing solutions to millions in a changing world, arising from a life lived with vision. While his curiosity comes naturally, he reminds himself that he must

remain humble to achieve success, and encouraged students to do the same.

True, it is a “dynamic and complex future” that awaits us all, not just the students of STU. But Mr Li’s determination to maintain his curiosity and passion has reshaped a large part of the world. Now it is time for the students of STU to play their part, with his words of wisdom lighting the way.

Readers can get the full text of the speech at www.lksf.org/the-future-is-now/ □