

For release
2 April 1996

NEW COURSE TEACHES GLOBAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Engineering students at Stanford and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology are learning to bridge physical distance as well as cultural differences in an innovative new course offered jointly by the two universities.

Students enrolled in Global Collaboration for Supply Chain Management and Product Development are asked to collaborate with partners overseas in tackling the real-world business problems of Hong Kong and US companies serving as course sponsors.

Communicating via fax, electronic mail, the World Wide Web, teleconferencing and videoconferencing, students at HKUST confer regularly with their counterparts at Stanford about the managerial issues involved in the creation and delivery of products and services across national and regional boundaries.

"Our project group consists of three HKUST students and four Stanford students," says Lin Fuhua, a student at HKUST. "We have to build up team morale while wrestling with all of the communications media available to us. This has really improved our communication skills for international trade."

One of the course sponsors is AT&T, which wants the logistics worked out for manufacture and assembly of electronic circuit packs by Asian joint ventures located mainly in China and Southeast Asia.

Another sponsor, Sterling Products Ltd, is a clothing manufacturer seeking to integrate operations based in Hong Kong, China and New York. A second clothing manufacturer wants to explore the market potential for entering the China trade.

"To communicate with students who have grown up in a completely different culture and to learn how to work with them harmoniously is not an easy job," says Yip Man Hang, another student at HKUST. "I find discussions with someone who is in another time zone very interesting."

Despite their extensive use of interactive multimedia technologies, the students all agree that one of the best parts of the course is the opportunity it gives them to meet face-to-face with their partners. The HKUST students journeyed to Stanford for a week-long planning session and plant tour in January. The Stanford students visited Hong Kong from 25 to 30 March to participate in the final project presentations.

"Our students have learned how to deliver results by working with people of different backgrounds, defining problems under uncertainty, and synthesizing diverse inputs," says Prof Mitchell M. Tseng, Head of HKUST's Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management Department. "These are all important capabilities for students to have in order to succeed in global business."

Taught by Prof Tseng and Dr C. J. Su at HKUST, and by Profs Hau Lee and Benham Tabrizi at Stanford, the course is to become a regular part of the curricula of the two universities. "We have embarked on a fascinating new venture," says Prof Lee, "and we are opening up new ground for learning and teaching."

Note to Editors:

Please direct enquiries to the Office of Public Affairs at 2358 6320 or pager 71163388 call 2652.