

FUTURE EXPERT, ARTHUR SHOSTAK, VISITS TKU

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Dr. Arthur Shostak, a renowned futurist, accompanied by his wife, Lynn Seng, arrived at TKU for a visit. In this visit, he has already given a series of lectures and spoken on a forum. He also met with Dr. Clement Chang, the Founder of TKU.

Dr. Shostak is a Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Drexel University, where he has taught for over 37 years. In his long academic career, he has taught a variety of courses and conducted diverse research. He has also written over 20 books addressing issues close to his heart such as promoting the concept of Utopia and futures oriented education, cyber union and American labor unions, men and abortion, and a privatized society.

He arrived at TKU as a visiting scholar on behalf of the World Future Society (WFS), to which TKU's Graduate Institute of Future Studies is affiliated. The institute helped organize his lectures on May 1 and 3 on the future of higher education and the methodology of predicating futures and trends. Students from the institute also had the opportunity to discuss issues on technology and imagined futures on a forum specifically organized for them.

In his lectures, Dr. Shostak mentioned the current gender distribution in the higher education in the US, stating that the male and female ratio among 2006 university graduates was 100:133. He predicted that the gap of this ratio will jump up to 100:142 by the year 2010, indicating an increasing influence of women in higher education and work places. Gender ratio in education aside, he also predicted that digital campus would become a commonplace in the future as a result of a wide acceptance to distance learning by today's younger generation.

With the propagation of anything digital, his next prediction did not come as a surprise when he said that the development of internet would continue to expand. He used the company, Google, and the number of blogs as evidence to support his view. He pointed out that Google employed 4989 staff in 2004, and 9378 in 2006, which doubled in the short span of one year. Equally impressive is the number of blogs that grew from 20,000,000 in 2005 to 57,000,000 in the following year. He urged scholars and students at his lectures to look out for figures such as these which could help them come up with intelligent predictions regarding our futures. However, according to him, great futurists, apart from possessing a keen sense of number and observation, also care about the history and the future of less privileged social groups and women.

Forum and lectures aside, Dr. Shostak was taken on a tour of the university, during which he noticed and praised the exhibition on global warming in the main library, and TKU' s beautiful and very green campus. He was also impressed by the diligence of our grad students who often stay up late on campus to do research.

Finally, he suggested the Institute of Future Studies to enhance cooperation with corporations, creating ample practical experiences for their students. Through such cooperation, students can apply what they learn in classrooms to real life, and industries can benefit from students' input, gaining some futures oriented thinking. This, Dr. Shostak said, is a win-win situation for both academic world and industries. He is scheduled to leave Taiwan on May 15 to continue his three-month journey in Asia. His next stops include South Korea and China. (~Ying-hsueh Hu)

