

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IS THE TICKET TO THE FUTURE

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Takmang Times invited Wu Maw-kuen, the Minister of the National Science Council (NSC), and Mai Chau-chen, a professor at the Department of Industrial Economics, also a former director of the Chung Hua Institution for Economic Research (CHIER) to give a talk on the relationship between natural sciences and social sciences on Thursday, November 18. They both espoused the view on this occasion that interdisciplinary research was a must in all kinds of research projects despite the difficulties in their execution

In this talk, Professor Mai, an economist, who has been teaching at TKU for one year, used his experience to illustrate the difficulties in marrying diverse disciplines, particularly in social sciences. At first, he had been working solely on theoretical issues at the Academia Sinica for years on end. Following that, he moved to the CHIER, which is a think-tank for the government for six years dealing with more practical policies. For him the most challenging part in this transition from an ivory-tower like environment to a cut-throat reality then back to the ivory tower is the discrepancy between theorists and practitioners. He quipped that when there were 10 economists at the table, there would be 11 different opinions on the same issue!

His experience was echoed by Wu Maw-kuen who pointed out the loose network in social sciences. If researchers in this field can cooperate better, their progresses will be in leaps and bounds, according to him. Both he and Professor Mai mentioned the example of SARS research, which can benefit immensely from multi-disciplinary involvement from both natural and social sciences to ensure breakthrough. Wu's creative take on matters was immediately rubbed off on Shiao Fung-shyung, the Dean of the College of Business who requested him to consult on the integrated projects his

college is or will be involved in.

Wu, who is also a graduate of TKU' s Department of Physics, made several constructive suggestions on Tamkang' s affairs, in particular, that of Lanyang Campus. For example, he is convinced that it should recruit students independently rather than participating in the pan-university entrance exam. Such an exam, he maintains, leaves students of no free choices. Lanyang, however, needs students who go there on their free will because they understand the unique quality of the campus. Only through this, Tamkang can attract and retain good students. Prior to that, Tamkang has to work on a uniqueness to corner the market. All top universities in the world, he added, have done that by creating a niche for themselves. He illustrated his point by mentioning the School of Clinical Medicine of the University of Cambridge who maintains a high standard by demanding a minimum one-year clinical experience as an entrance prerequisite. Good grades themselves do not guarantee a place.

Eventually, Wu gave valuable suggestions to the university on the donation strategy. It is of utmost importance, he insists, that academic units, such as departments, let the alumni see the vision such as what TKU students will evolve into in a few years' time. Furthermore, the university should have a clear mission statement reminding itself constantly what is still missing in order to accomplish that. It can share that with the alumni who will decide, based on that, whether they can be of any assistance in bring the university closer to its goals.

A third talk on similar topic will be held this Monday, November 22 at 10 a.m. at the Ching Sheng International Conference Hall, given by Chen Po-chang, the Dean of TKU College of Education and Huang Wen-shu, the president of the National Dong Hwa University on "Education Reform or Market Reform?—An uneasy Relationship between the Universities and Market." Everyone is welcome.