HKU Faculty of Dentistry opens remodelled Problem-based Learning Suite

The HKU Faculty of Dentistry officially opened its remodelled Problem-based Learning Suite at a Grand Opening Ceremony on 1 November 2012. The Guest-of-Honour was Professor John Malpas, HKU Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Infrastructure) [pictured, between Prof Cynthia KY Yiu (L) and Prof Lakshman Samaranayake (R)].

The HKU Faculty of Dentistry is well known for its pioneering use of an interactive education method in its Bachelor of Dental Surgery curriculum, known as “problem-based learning” (PBL). This method includes the discussion of especially designed problems among small groups of students and thus needs purpose-built facilities.

Situated on the ground floor of the Prince Philip Dental Hospital, the Faculty’s Problem-based Learning Suite was completely reconfigured this summer after 2 years of planning. The HK$2-million renovation was based on international trends in designing learning venues that incorporate advanced technology to suit today’s tech-savvy generation, while optimising hospital space to accommodate this year’s double cohort of dental students.

The new Suite contains a resource room, student common room, and 12 soundproof tutorial rooms each equipped with an interactive whiteboard with WiFi connectivity to facilitate small-group discussions. Frosted glass walls create an open, natural-lit, but private learning environment. Two adjoining rooms, also separated by glass, allow observation of tutorials for staff development.

“In 1998, the Faculty was one of the first in Asia to integrate PBL into the dental curriculum to enhance critical thinking, self-directed study, teamwork, and effective, life-long learning,” said HKU Dean of Dentistry, Prof Lakshman Samaranayake at the opening ceremony. “However, we are constantly at the forefront, looking for new ways to engage and invigorate students and staff for the future.”

Among the people Prof Samaranayake thanked for the collaborations involved in the PBL Suite revamp were staff of the University Estates Office and Prince Philip Dental Hospital and Faculty staff, Prof Cynthia KY Yiu (Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education), Dr Susan Bridges (new Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education), and Dr Michael Botelho (previous Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education). “I must not forget our BDS students, who took part in the consultations and feedback on how to reconfigure the suite to best suit their learning requirements,” he added.

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For more information about the HKU Faculty of Dentistry, please visit http://facdent.hku.hk; Facebook page: www.facebook.com/facdent
For more information on problem-based learning in dentistry, see: http://facdent.hku.hk/docs/PBL_FacDentHKU_2008.pdf

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