

EDUCATION

OUTGOING HKU COUNCIL MEMBER MAKES PEACE

Leonie Ki says she has 'no hard feelings' towards student leaders despite bitter clashes over the appointment of university's pro-vice-chancellor

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A controversial departing member of the University of Hong Kong's governing council has said she holds "no hard feelings" towards student leaders and now meets them regularly, after three years of thorny relations.

But Leonie Ki Man-fung said her second term on the university body was "worse than hell", marked by bitter debate and clashes over an appointment.

Ki said she had since managed to thaw relations with former student union president Billy Fung Jing-en and his deputy, Colman Li Fung-kay.

"We don't talk about politics when we meet," Ki said. "I just remind them that whatever they do, do it legally and don't get yourself jailed. Even if you are interested in politics, just finish your studies first and get yourself equipped."

Ki, whose second term on the HKU council ended last week, was among high-profile members who spoke up against the appointment of liberal law professor Johannes Chan Man-mun as pro-vice-chancellor.

In September 2015, the council rejected Chan's appointment by 12 votes to eight in a secret ballot. Fung and Li, who supported Chan, then directed their anger at Ki and another council member, Arthur Li Kwok-cheung.



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Ki then questioned Fung's integrity after he leaked details of council talks on rejecting Chan.

She also separately accused Chan of using "external and internal forces" to get his appointment approved.

The episode upset Ki greatly, she said, as she had long been involved in youth work in her academic career, including an exchange programme with mainland universities.

She also sat on the governing boards of two other higher learning institutions for 12 years before serving HKU, her alma mater.

"For my entire life I have been welcomed by youngsters, but the time on the HKU council was worse than hell," Ki said.

Relations between university management and students hit a new low when Fung led a number of his peers in blocking council members from leaving a meeting in January 2016, demanding dialogue on governance reforms.

Caught in the middle of the fracas, Ki complained of dizziness and numbness in her legs. Surrounded by students and media, she was carried to an ambulance after about 40 minutes.

Fung was later charged with criminally intimidating Arthur Li-by then council chairman - while Colman Li was accused of obstructing the ambulance crew.

The case, however, provided a chance for both sides to mend fences. Colman Li apologised to Ki, and asked if she could write a mitigation letter to the court to plead for leniency.

"I was at first a bit hesitant to accept, because there was no mutual trust - I wasn't even sure it wasn't a trap," Ki recalled.

But after hearing Li's family background in a meeting with the student, she decided to join hundreds of alumni and professors in writing to the court. Fung also privately apologised to Ki.

The student leaders received community service sentences instead of jail time.

Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme

Implemented by the Advisory Committee on Arts Development, the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme now launches the 8th round funding exercise. The Scheme will provide arts groups with funding support in realising innovative and impactful proposals that contribute to the objectives of:

- capacity development
- programme / content development