

Facing Up to Challenges¹

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Distinguished guests, teachers and graduates,

To the class of 2020, a big welcome back.

Until recently, we were not sure that this graduation ceremony would take place, because of the pandemic.

This graduation ceremony is, therefore, different. I am sorry your parents can't be here. But pandemic or no pandemic, we are determined to see the smile on your face as you come up to receive your diploma. After more than 5 months, it feels so good to see you all back here again. A university is not a university without students.

When the new year began, no one knew what was waiting for us. You have been through a lot this year—fear, isolation,

crisis, and a world turned upside down. You are the only graduating class to live through a global Black Swan event.

This pandemic has taught us all a big lesson: that life is unpredictable. Now you know the wisdom of the ancient Chinese Book of *I-Ching*. There are 64 hexagrams in the book. Its final hexagram is called: incompleteness or uncertainty.

This ancient book has a modern message for us.

Of the two guest speakers we have invited for this ceremony, both are unable to be here physically because of the cross-border quarantine. So, they are speaking to you by video. One of them is Dr. Chen Yidan.

If you don't know who Dr. Chen is, you should. Dr. Chen is a perfect exam-

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ple of how to cope with the unpredictable life. He got a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Shenzhen University, and later a master's degree in economic law from Nanjing University. But instead of working as a chemist in the lab or serving in a law office, he and his fellow classmates Ma Huateng and others saw and seized an opportunity to become the co-founders of Tencent, the tech giant that has drastically changed the way people live and do business in China.

Dr. Chen stepped down as Tencent's Chief Administrative Officer in 2013. After that, he has been devoting himself full-time to the promotion of education. He is the founder of Wuhan College and has established the global Yidan Prize, offering the world's two biggest awards for innovation in education every year.

In short, after Dr. Chen has done well, he focuses on doing good through education.

Some of you may join the job market. The days of life-long employment are gone

forever. According to statistics, the average worker changes jobs 12 times during a working life. Young workers stay only 2.8 years in a job, with 30% changing jobs every 12 months.

For a fast-changing world, the value of a liberal arts education is not so much in getting passive knowledge, but in preparing for an uncertain world, for which you need self-learning skills, in addition to problem-solving skills and a brave spirit in seizing opportunities. Don't be afraid to fail, because failure is a good teacher. If you change jobs often, you obviously need one other skill: networking skill. And of course, you must know how to express yourself, including at job interviews.

Dear graduates, you are full of promise as you step out into a world full of uncertainties.

I sincerely hope you will take your inspiration from Dr. Chen, and learn to reinvent yourself, regardless of what you studied in university.

Goodbye and good luck.