

## **An Endowment for the Sociology Department to Advance Academic Excellence**

The Sociology Department of Fu Jen Catholic University in December 2020 announced the availability of scholarships in honor of Rita Yeh Tao-lei for their MA program. These scholarships came about through the generosity of Mr. Patrick Huang and his wife Sharon Huang. Mr. Huang was a teaching assistant in the early years of the department. They donated US \$ 350,000 to set up an endowment fund for scholarships as a way to remember Rita Yeh who had graduated number one in the first graduating class (1973) from the Fu Jen Sociology Department. With the permission of the donors, US 100,000 of this fund will be immediately available to start advancing academic excellence for the department.

Professor Weng Chih-Yuan, chair of the department, together with the collaboration of the dean of the College of Social Science and faculty of Sociology provided a summary of how Fu Jen, as a comprehensive university with a Catholic heritage, is uniquely positioned to address the many challenges that society in Taiwan has been facing which is now exacerbated by the pandemic.

The support will first be used to recruit qualified students to a 5-year program starting at the undergraduate level through the master's program in order to maintain adequate and quality research assistance for faculty. In addition, the endowment gift will address the issues of diminishing birth rate, an aging society and now the impact of COVID-19 upon education, the economy and society. Professor Weng will initiate programs to include interdisciplinary research and collaborative teaching with the College of Human Ecology, the Departments of Public Health, Social Work, Information Management, and other relevant units as he moves forward to raise academic visibility and excellence to the department.

Rita Yeh, in whose honor the endowment fund has been established, experienced many hardships after her graduation from Fu Jen, graduate studies in the United States and her life after returning to Taiwan in 1978. Her story exemplifies the social changes of a society because of economic, historical and political differences.

This is the first endowment gift with an initial cash payment to expedite the advancement of a department. Such an approach will be broadly introduced on campus as a role model for other departments and colleges on campus to enhance academic excellence through interdepartmental and inter-college cooperation.

Our deepest appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Patrick and Sharon Huang for their generosity and understanding of the importance of sociology in today's society.