HKUST CIVL Outstanding Young Alumni Award



Ir Dr. YIU Wing-Nam, Coco

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Citation

When Ir Dr. Coco Yiu entered HKUST in 2010, she discovered that engineering was about far more than calculations, structures, and technical solutions. It was about applying knowledge responsibly to improve lives and build a better community. Her studies in Civil and Structural Engineering and General Business Management cultivated the analytical mindset, interdisciplinary perspective, and sense of social responsibility that have shaped her distinguished career in engineering and public service.

At HKUST, Coco's passion for research first took root through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program under the mentorship of Prof. Limin Zhang, where she explored landslide risk and geotechnical engineering. Together with her final year project and an exchange experience at the University of Michigan, these opportunities broadened her horizons and inspired her to pursue advanced research. She went on to obtain a DPhil in Engineering Science from the University of Oxford, where her research focused on understanding the effects of tunnelling in soft ground on buildings. By combining advanced numerical modelling with field observations from real projects, she developed practical and systematic approaches for assessing tunnelling-induced building damage, contributing valuable knowledge to the field through scholarly publications and international conferences.

Returning to Hong Kong in 2018, Coco joined the Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO) of the Civil Engineering and Development Department. Through the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers Scheme “A” Training, she gained extensive experience spanning investigation, design, construction supervision, and safety management across major infrastructure projects. Her professionalism, technical competence, and ability to translate engineering theory into practical solutions earned wide recognition, culminating in First Prize in the HKIE Trainee of the Year Award 2021.

Since then, Coco has dedicated herself to one of Hong Kong’s most important public safety missions: managing landslide risk in a densely populated urban environment. As a project engineer under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme, she has overseen the investigation, design, and implementation of slope upgrading and mitigation works protecting communities, transport networks, and critical infrastructure. Her work reflects a deep understanding that every engineering decision carries real implications for public safety and societal resilience.

Beyond project delivery, Coco has made significant contributions to advancing geotechnical engineering practice in Hong Kong. She has played an important role in the revision of the Geotechnical Manual for Slopes, a cornerstone of Hong Kong’s internationally recognized slope safety system. Working closely with consultants, academics, and fellow engineers, she contributed to the development of more transparent and risk-informed approaches for considering uncertainty in slope engineering. Through technical studies, stakeholder engagement, and industry consultation, she has consistently demonstrated an ability to bridge academic rigor with engineering practice, translating research insights into practical guidance that benefits the wider profession.

Coco's commitment to societal resilience extends far beyond her technical work. As a GEO School Ambassador, she has promoted slope safety and disaster preparedness among students and the public, helping to foster greater awareness of the importance of community resilience. She has also been an active contributor to the engineering profession through the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers and the Institution of Civil Engineers, receiving outstanding service awards from both organizations in recognition of her dedication to professional development and knowledge sharing. Her appointment as a Nominated Member of Technical Committee 208 (Slope Stability) of the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering further reflects the international recognition of her expertise and potential.

Equally passionate about nurturing future generations, Coco has remained closely connected to her alma mater through career talks and engagement with HKUST students and has supervised GEO summer interns over several years. By sharing her experiences in research, public service, and professional practice, she has inspired young engineers to pursue excellence while embracing opportunities to serve society.

Building on her achievements in engineering, public service, and international collaboration, Coco has recently been selected for a United Nations Junior Professional Officer appointment. In this role, she will contribute to sustainable development initiatives on the global stage, bringing with her the values, expertise, and commitment to public service cultivated throughout her journey from HKUST student to engineering leader.

Through her outstanding professional accomplishments, contributions to geotechnical risk management and public safety, dedication to advancing the engineering profession, and commitment to inspiring future generations, Ir Dr. Coco Yiu exemplifies the highest ideals of HKUST CIVL. The Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering is proud to confer upon her the HKUST CIVL Outstanding Young Alumni Award.