



University Introduces Inclusive Pad Vending Machines to Promote Gender Equality

With the initiative aimed at promoting gender equality and fostering an inclusive environment, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) has installed vending machines for sanitary products in three locations across its campus. This move, spearheaded by the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) and supported by the Diversity and Inclusion Office (DIO), marks a significant step towards guaranteeing the well-being and dignity of all female members of the university community.

Promoting Gender Equality



Pad vending machine on campus: simple instructions are printed on the machine and users can pay by Octopus.

The idea for installing pad vending machines in female restrooms at CUHK originated from suggestions made by staff and students, eventually leading to a collaboration project with WOMENX BIOTECH, a start-up founded by a CUHK alumna. Dr. Choi Pui-Wah was an inaugural recipient of the CUHK's Science Faculty Young Alumni Award in 2023.

Dedicated to enhancing women's health through innovative solutions, Dr. Choi founded WOMENX BIOTECH which manufactures its brand of sanitary products, including both regular pads and pads with detection functions for female diseases. The company also offers vending machines to provide convenience and easy access to sanitary products.



Dr Choi Pui-Wah attended the CUHK's Science Faculty Distinguished Alumni Lectures as the recipient of the Young Alumni Award.

Access to sanitary products is a basic necessity, yet it remains a challenge for many women. The introduction of pad vending machines is more than just a practical solution. It is a statement of the University's dedication to gender equality.

By providing easy access to sanitary products, CUHK acknowledges and addresses the unique needs of its female students and staff, thereby promoting an inclusive and supportive environment.



A Collaborative Effort

The University's partnership with WOMENX BIOTECH also highlights its support for entrepreneurial ventures by its alumni. By choosing to collaborate with a start-up founded by its alumna, the University is fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within its community.

This collaboration meets the immediate needs of the university's female population and strengthens the bond between CUHK and its alumni network, promoting a cycle of support and development, while showcasing the University's ongoing support for the accomplishments of its alumni.



Science Faculty 60th Anniversary Banquet – Presentation of Science Faculty Young Alumni Award (16 Sep 2023)

Dr. Choi's connection to CUHK dates back to her time as a student when she began her research in the pathogenesis and screening methods of ovarian cancer. Reflecting on this collaboration, Dr. Choi said, "It is truly heartening to contribute to a project that directly benefits the community where I once studied".

The CUHK Faculty of Science (CUHK Science) has also been stepping up its efforts to acknowledge outstanding alumni.

In 2023, at the occasion of the Faculty and the University's diamond jubilee, the Science Faculty Distinguished Award was established to recognise alumni for their exceptional accomplishments in the professional fields based on four criteria:

- ☒ Outstanding professional achievements and innovation,
- ☒ Commitment to excellence and leadership,
- ☒ Contributions to CUHK Science and the University, and
- ☒ Engagement and impact on society.

Three tiers of awards have been established to give recognition to alumni at different stages of their careers, starting from the Young Alumni Award, the Alumni Achievement Award, to the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Prof. SONG Chunshan, Dean of Science expressed gratitude for the collaboration. "We at the Faculty of Science are very glad to learn of this initiative involving one of our very own alumni, Dr. Choi Pui-wah, who graduated with her BSc in Biochemistry in 2009, followed by receiving her PhD in Biochemistry in 2013.



Though still early in her career, Dr. Choi has exemplified one of our Faculty's ideals – Learn Science to Better the World – by implementing her scientific background towards enhancing women's health, which could benefit women around the world.

Her company's new collaboration with the DIO in making feminine hygiene products more readily available for women on the CUHK campus, would not only bring convenience and hopefully reduce stigma around menstruation, but reinforce the message that we aspire to create and maintain a vibrant, collegial, and friendly and inclusive environment for diverse faculty, staff, and students in our campus community."

A Commitment to Inclusion

To kick start the collaboration, the pad vending machines have been installed in the following locations:

- Ground Floor female restroom of Yasumoto International Academic Park (YIA)
- Ground Floor female restroom of Cheng Yu Tung Building (CYT)
- 7th Floor female restroom of Mong Man Wai Building (MMW)



Pad vending machine installed outside YIA G/F female restroom.

The three pilot locations were chosen to gauge the response and effectiveness of the vending machines over one year. Feedback from users will be collected and analysed to determine the success of the initiative and to identify areas for improvement. The Diversity and Inclusion Office (DIO) welcomes views and feedback from the University community. This initiative is expected to pave the way for additional supportive measures that align with CUHK's goals of inclusivity and equality.

The University continually seeks ways to support its diverse population through initiatives that address a wide range of needs. By focusing on comprehensive inclusivity, CUHK aims to create a more inclusive and supportive campus environment, embodying the University's dedication to excellence and equality.