Speech at the ceremony of 10th anniversary of Ho Yu-Chi’s professional team

First of all, on behalf of the oversea professional team, I wish to thank the leaders of Tsinghua University including former President 王大中, President 顾秉林, foundation chair 贺美英 for their strong and financial support of the Center during the past decade. It was in 2000 when President Wang and Academician Li Yanda learned that I was about to retire from my Harvard post after 40+ years that they asked me if I am interested in taking up a chair professorship at Tsinghua after retirement in 2001. I grew up and lived my formative years in the US and have continuously lived there for over 60 years. I realized that temperament-wise, I may no longer fit to live in China on a longer term basis. Instead I came back with an alternative proposal that I’ll undertake to assemble a team of well accomplished Chinese-American professors from different universities to share the duties of the professorship, each devoting about one month/year in residence in Tsinghua but otherwise conduct our duties voluntarily via e-mail and other communication means. The idea of professorial team was thus born. Accompanying the team, we also proposed the founding of the Center for Intelligent and Networked Systems (CFINS) as a focal point for the education of graduate students and cutting edge research in the department of Automation.
At the time of the founding of the Center, Tsinghua undergraduate students already had a world wide reputation of being well prepared for graduate study. The charge to the professorial team was that we should devote our effort to the education of Tsinghua graduate and particularly Ph.D student so that they will be known as world class and first rate. In the past decade, we can honestly say that the team has done that.

Speaking for myself, I can testify that the three Ph.D students I produced from CFINS are with exactly the same care, devotion, and standards as my 50 other Harvard Ph.Ds.

However, privately I have also two unspoken goals myself which I shall now reveal at the ten year anniversary celebration. First, as a child born to parents, s/he requires the support of the parents in the early years. But every child must learn to support him/herself and payback to his/her parent. Similarly, no organization can long survive if it cannot financially be independent and self supporting. I am glad to say for the past five years CFINS is supporting herself and in addition supports a number of master and ph.d students with funds competitively won both in China and from the US. In this sense, one can say Tsinghua has made a very profitable investment in CFINS. Second, CFINS is gaining in world wide recognition. This is not on my say so but on objective evidences. For the past two years, internationally well known persons at MIT, UC Berkeley, and a well established Dutch University have independently approached
CFINS for cooperative research effort with promised financial contribution. These overtures came directly to CFINS scientists without intervention and effort of the professorial team for introduction and connections. Nothing speaks louder than such peer recognition which can ONLY be accomplished with the effort of the resident Center staff. You can say now CFINS is ON THE MAP. Or in the words of Chairman Mao, “CFINS has stood up”

In conclusion, let me say thanks to the effort of the entire CFINS personnel for their devotion in the past decade. You are well on your way to be among the top rank in world wide science/technology research centers and help Chinese S&T to claim her rightful place in the world.