

Some of Our Alumni



“ I see over-leveraging and pure greed as the root causes (of the current financial tsunami). But no regulator can prevent fraud; no amount of regulations can forestall greed. Good regulators will be able to spot problems earlier, nip them in the bud and take action to prevent them from spilling over and turning into a full scale crisis. ”

Laura Cha

As a regulator, the SFC encourages the exchange of information and ideas with industry participants. Over the years, numerous professionals have made their mark at the SFC and then moved on to further their careers either in the financial industry or some other sector. At least one headed north to apply their expertise in helping formulate the financial regulatory framework for China. No matter how far they have moved up the ladder in a diverse range of successful careers, they all agree that time spent at the SFC was fulfilling and challenging.

Laura Cha: Non-Official Member – the Executive Council of Hong Kong; Deputy Chairman – the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp, Ltd

Laura Cha has been forging new ground throughout most of her career, although, by her own account, she never really planned it.

When head-hunted to join the SFC back in 1991, she thought she would “give it a try” as she could always return to legal practice after the standard 30-month contract. Little did she realise that she would last a full 10 years and end up being our deputy chairman.

When she came to the SFC, she was one of just two local staff among the top 20 senior executives and the only woman. But she soon found a niche – to help develop a capital-raising framework in Hong Kong for Mainland’s state-owned enterprises (SOEs), as part of Premier Zhu Rongji’s economic reforms.

It was hard work being a pioneer. To prepare for SOE listings in Hong Kong, Laura spent more than 20 weekends in one single year in Beijing to meet with Mainland officials. Internally, it was also a challenge trying to “sell” the idea of H shares to the SFC’s board of directors. “The Mainland’s economy was just getting off the ground and I was basically the only one pushing the idea of listing Mainland companies. Thankfully I had the support of Chairman Robert Owen and CFD Executive Director Ermanno Pascutto,” she says. The Mainland had no company law until July 1994 and the Securities Law came even later. She was navigating in uncharted territories.

When approached by the Central Government to be a vice-chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) in 2001, she also had “no special mission in mind”. She just wanted to enhance some basic investor protection practices and raise the standard of



corporate governance, the same things she had been doing at the SFC. She became the first person outside the Mainland to take up a vice-ministerial position in the Central Government.

At the CSRC, it appeared to her that giving middle management some international exposure would benefit the outlook of the organisation. She used her salary, which by special permission of the State Council, was the same as what she earned at the SFC, to send a few CSRC staff overseas every year for training as well as academic studies. By the time she left the CSRC in 2004, more than 20 staff had earned master degrees from overseas universities or participated in training at overseas regulators. After she left the CSRC, she continued her educational mission by endowing two annual scholarships for Mainland students, one for a MBA degree at the Yale University School of Management and the other for a LLM degree at the London School of Economics. "I felt that educating more talent for the Mainland was in some ways more meaningful than having me spend more years at the CSRC, as both scholarships would go on indefinitely," she says.

Laura is impressed by how Mainland regulators, especially the highly dedicated upper echelon, have been catching up with more advanced markets. She explains, for instance, that consultations for new rules and policies are all done electronically and are often completed faster on the Mainland than

in Hong Kong. "It is frequently easier to implement reforms in the Mainland," she says. "A lot of Hong Kong people underestimate our Mainland counterparts' commitment and efficiency."

Barbara Shiu: Chief Risk Officer – BoC International Holdings Ltd; Chairwoman – Hong Kong Securities Institute (HKSI)

Barbara Shiu's career exemplifies what it means to know what one wants and then to go for it.

After working in the banking sector for a number of years, Barbara knew that the policy side of the industry would be her next target. "In the private sector, you choose your path according to the objectives of the company," she notes. "But when you are a policy maker, you are looking at whether there are enough paths for the market, whether they are good enough, whether they have become obsolete, or whether more paths should be

opened up. I wanted to get more exposure on the policy side."

Almost from the start, she found her job at the SFC very meaningful in terms of its impact on the market, the intermediaries and the investing public. As Senior Director of Intermediaries Supervision, she spearheaded the SFC's takeover of regulation of securities brokers from the stock exchange. The transfer needed to happen in about half a year – by March 2000 – as the securities exchange demutualised and merged with the futures exchange and clearing houses. On top of 100 plus futures brokers, the SFC now had to oversee some 800 securities brokers.

"Developing a system to handle the five-fold increase in the number of regulatees was a big challenge, but we did it on time and had the system up and running

“ Since the HKSI has been receiving considerable support from market practitioners and is close to the market, it is a good bridge between the SFC and some of the issues that practitioners are faced with especially concerning licensing and training. ”

Barbara Shiu



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before the change (demutualisation) was implemented,” she recalls.

After the SFC, she had what she describes as the privilege of working at the CSRC. “It was an experience that no money could buy,” she says. “I wouldn’t have this level of knowledge and understanding of the Mainland market had I not worked there.”

As the new chairwoman of the HKSI, Barbara now works closely with the SFC to maintain and raise industry standards. She has a lot of urgent tasks ahead of her and hopes that, in the longer run, the efforts of the HKSI in improving the capabilities of market practitioners will also benefit investors.

Peter Au-yang: Director – AsiaSoft Co, Ltd

After 18 years with the HSBC Group

specialising in corporate finance, Peter Au-Yang made a major decision to embrace change in his career. He has not looked back and has been taking up new challenges ever since.

Peter joined the SFC as an Executive Director and its Chief Operating Officer in May 2003. With that move, not only did he cross from the private to the public sector but he also changed from a line job to a staff job. Some 18 months later, he also doubled up as the SFC’s Executive Director of Corporate Finance.

Moving from the private to the public sector required some adjustment. At the same time, Peter wanted to bring his previous experience as an investment banker to his role at the SFC. “A regulator should know what’s happening in the industry,” he says.

Going from the front line to overseeing the infrastructure of the SFC was not a major challenge, given his prior management experience. And with 18 years of experience behind him, it was not that difficult for him to take up the corporate finance post at the SFC either. “No matter which post I was in, I was able to establish a good professional relationship with my direct subordinates and earn their trust,” Peter recalls. “We worked in harmony and I saw no conflict between the two posts.”

On finishing his three-year contract in 2006, Peter invested in a group of companies which, among other things, introduce established US software into Mainland China. Once again, his corporate finance skills have proved invaluable in deal structuring and negotiations with both US and Mainland partners.



“ Working at the SFC, a public body, I was reminded always that to advocate any policy – even if it’s most justifiable – one needs to convince the stakeholders and the public. It’s best to let them come to their own conclusions rather than impose something on them. One must listen to them. The importance of consultation – that was the biggest lesson I learned. ”

Peter Au-yang



“Working for the SFC was the best career move I ever made (or anyone could make). It opened my eyes to many things, professionally and personally. It gave me an all-encompassing perspective on the capital markets and an appreciation for regulation.”

Angelina Kwan



Outside work, Peter is less conventional. Motorcycling is a hobby he has picked up since leaving the SFC and in less than three years, he has collected no fewer than six motorcycles. From time to time, however, he still prefers going down the fast lane in his Ferraris.

**Angelina Kwan:
Chief Operating Officer and
Managing Director – Asia Pacific
Region, Cantor Fitzgerald**

When a travel warning was put on Hong Kong at the peak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) pandemic in May 2003, it was just one more crisis for Angelina Kwan to handle.

Crisis management was Angelina’s “most memorable development” during a career of nearly eight years at the SFC. Every time a crisis struck, she was right there to set the contingency plan in motion. As a director in the Supervision of Markets Division during SARS, she quickly deployed her skills in internal auditing, law and compliance to co-ordinate and implement an expanded “Business Contingency Plan” designed originally for the Millennium Bug. “To see the whole of the SFC work together as a team – that was very rewarding,” she recalls.

Angelina’s knack for networking came in handy at the SFC, where the regulator needs a bridge to the markets to

keep track of industry developments. “Communication is key to problem solving,” she explains. “I am a people person. At the SFC, I would meet new people nearly every day on various issues and then work with different divisions to resolve their issues.”

Since re-entering the private sector, Angelina has been putting her SFC experience to good use, including, a macro view of the market and contacts in both the Government and industry. She credits her SFC experience to fast-tracking her career. In three years at Cantor Fitzgerald, Angelina has moved from being Head of Legal and Compliance to Chief Operating Officer for Asia Pacific and most recently, a managing director.

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“As a manager, I learned to trust and empower. If you don’t let your staff make mistakes, they’ll never learn. Respect for others is also important. Even someone junior can come up with workable solutions that skip the mind of more experienced people.”

Kerry Ching

Kerry Ching: Managing Director – Hong Kong, FIL Investment Management (Hong Kong) Ltd

For career development, nothing beats the timely matching of individual skills with the development of an industry and Kerry Ching can vouch for it.

Kerry returned to Hong Kong from Toronto in 1995, determined to share her knowledge acquired from Canadian mutual fund houses with the then emerging local fund industry. In 1998, as a manager in the SFC’s Investment Products Department, Kerry was involved extensively in the

preparatory work to launch the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF), including numerous discussions with the industry, helping draft the SFC Code on MPF Products, and dividing work between the SFC and the yet-to-be-established Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority.

“For the fund industry, the SFC is like the Shao Lin Temple for kung fu masters,” she says. “Many who left (the SFC) for the private sector have brought their regulatory knowledge and skills to the industry,” she says. “We have a similar mindset, so it is easier for us to get things achieved across the industry.”

But more than industry knowledge, Kerry has been able to acquire three major sets of skills to apply in her development in the private sector. Armed with what she calls “hard skills” (such as knowledge on products and regulations), “soft skills” (such as risk management, logical thinking) and networking skills, she has been moving steadily up the corporate ladder since returning to the private sector.

Although Kerry is passionate about work, she makes it a point to “have a life”. She turns off her Blackberry while having lunch with friends, has dinner at least once a week with her mom, hits a few hard balls in a game of squash with friends, and also enjoys a little retail therapy.