When Professor Thomas Mak visited mainland China in 1973 as a member of the first scholarly delegation from Hong Kong, he observed a research environment in need of significant improvement. Since then he has done whatever he can to help mainland researchers develop their capabilities. A renowned research chemist himself, and now Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, Professor Mak has been instrumental in attracting young mainland scholars to study and conduct research at CUHK, and their more seasoned counterparts to present scientific reports on campus.

In 2001 Professor Mak was elected a member of the prestigious Chinese Academy of Sciences for his substantial contribution to the development of chemistry in mainland China, and is one of only 121 members in the Chemistry Division. His own research focuses on crystal engineering, or the design and synthesis of structures at the molecular level, structural inorganic chemistry and coordination network assembly. He is a prolific author, with over 900 papers published in international journals.

Professor Mak’s co-authored volume *Crystallography in Modern Chemistry* is a very important reference work for scholars interested in crystal structures. It was described by *Acta Crystallographica* as ‘a gem of a reference book on structural chemistry’ and a must for ‘every chemical and biochemical laboratory’. Another co-authored volume, *Advanced Structural Inorganic Chemistry*, has been praised as going a ‘long way in improving the understanding of modern chemical crystallography among the general chemistry community’. Professor Mak’s collaborators on both books were researchers either from CUHK or from mainland China. Thirty-six years on, his commitment to fostering research in China has never wavered.