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Ex-surgery head of HKU guilty of misconduct and false accounting

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A former Head of Department of Surgery of The University of Hong Kong (HKU), charged by the ICAC, was today (Tuesday) convicted at the District Court of misconduct for misusing HKU funds to hire a domestic helper and covering up a subordinate's embezzlement, as well as false accounting in relation to overseas travelling expenses.

John Wong, 71, was found guilty of four charges - two of misconduct in public office, and two of false accounting.

Judge Susana D'Almada Remedios adjourned the case until April 19 for sentence. The defendant was granted cash bail of \$100,000, and ordered not to leave Hong Kong.

The case arose from a corruption complaint. Subsequent ICAC enquiries revealed the above offences.

The court heard that at the material times, the defendant was the Head of Department of Surgery of HKU.

In 1995, the department established the Skills Development Centre (SDC) to provide medical training to all surgical specialties, medical students, interns, nurses and doctors. Various courses offered by the SDC included Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS).

In January 2005, the defendant set up Unisurgical Limited (Unisurgical), of which he was the sole shareholder cum director. Unisurgical was not a charitable organisation and enjoyed no tax exemption.

The court heard that between January 29, 2002 and January 30, 2007, the defendant directed a total of over \$730,000 from the two respective bank accounts of the SDC and the ATLS to be used as payments for hiring a domestic helper cum driver.

Between late 2006 and December 23, 2008, the defendant failed to report to HKU that his subordinate June Chan Sau-hung, then an Administrative Assistant, had stolen money totalling over \$2.6 million from the bank account of the SDC.

Instead, the defendant lent money to her to pay back the bank account to cover up the theft offences; and allowed her to resign from HKU without being investigated and/or disciplined, so as to receive from HKU the full payments of the Staff Provident Fund totalling over \$690,000.

The court heard that on November 20, 2006 and November 14, 2007, the defendant falsified respective entries in the Directors' Report and Accounts of Unisurgical for the year ended March 31, 2006 and March 31, 2007, purporting to show that over \$690,000 and over \$74,000 had been incurred as overseas travelling expenses respectively.

As a result, Unisurgical underpaid its taxes by more than \$124,000, the court was told.

HKU had rendered full assistance to the ICAC in the investigation.

The prosecution was today represented by Senior Counsel Wong Man-kit and Public Prosecutor Claudia Ng, assisted by ICAC officer Bryan Fong.

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