



**REMARKS BY PROFESSOR TAN ENG CHYE
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
5 JANUARY 2018, 2.10 PM
SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, SINGAPORE, TOWER BALLROOM**

Madam Halimah Yacob, NUS Chancellor and President of the Republic of Singapore
Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam
Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong
Minister for Finance, Mr Heng Swee Keat
Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills), Mr Ong Ye Kung
NUS Pro-Chancellors
NUS Chairman Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, and NUS Trustees
Chorh Chuan and Evelyn
Ladies and Gentlemen

“Becoming a Truly Great University”

1. Good afternoon, and a Happy New Year to all. Thank you, Minister Ong, Fu Hua, and Chorh Chuan for your very kind words today. I am deeply appreciative that everyone here took time out of their busy schedules to join us today to thank Chorh Chuan, and to welcome me in my first week as NUS President.

2. I would begin by putting on record our thanks and appreciation to Chorh Chuan for being an outstanding President for the last nine years. You have, through great vision and sheer hard work, transformed NUS into a university that has become a model for others in the region and the world. It was a pleasure to work with you, and a great honour to have the opportunity to build on your achievements at NUS. We are proud that you will continue to contribute to NUS as our University Professor.

3. I first learnt that I would become the 5th President of NUS, and the 23rd leader of this national institution when Fu Hua came to my office to break the news in person. It was a moment of great joy, and also some anxiety. Joy, because it is a privilege to work with Fu Hua and the Board, Teck Hua,

and my talented colleagues in the leadership team. We have a common goal: to take NUS to even greater heights. Anxiety, because this is an immense task, and also because this reality is so far away from my boyhood dream of becoming a policeman. I had wanted to become a policeman because I loved the uniform; and as many of you know, there is no uniform or uniformity in NUS!

4. Since our founding in 1905, NUS has had a distinguished history of contribution and leadership in service of country and society. Members of our community have achieved many firsts across diverse fields, often advancing health, technological innovation, and societal development through research discoveries and their application, and social and policy recommendations.

5. We have many notable pioneers, who include Emeritus Professor Shan Ratnam, founder of Singapore's in-vitro fertilisation programme; former Cabinet Minister Dr Ahmad Mattar, a devoted champion of the environment and the Muslim community, whose PhD on traffic noise at NUS became the base for later studies and legislation; Mrs Ann Wee, the founding mother of social work in Singapore; and Mr Tan Min-Liang, the co-founder and CEO of the gaming hardware company Razer Inc.

6. Our eminent alumni include six Singapore Presidents and Prime Ministers. Among them, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Founding Prime Minister of Singapore; Madam President; and ESM Goh. We are deeply grateful for the many life-changing contributions of the many members of our community, for they have helped to propel NUS to be among the leading universities of the world.

7. But what's next for NUS? Where do we go to from here? How do we move from being a really good university, to a great one? What would it take for NUS to become a truly great university? I'd like to share with you some thoughts on our ambition.

8. **First, we believe our students should be students for life.** NUS graduates are amongst the 16th most employable graduates in the world. We constantly innovate to ensure that we give our students the best educational experience. Last year, in support of the national SkillsFuture efforts, we offered 400 seats for selected modules in our NUS Lifelong Learning Initiative for Alumni - the first of its kind in Singapore. We received more than 8,000 applications for 400 places – for just about more than 20 applications for every place offered! Mr Caleb Leow, an NUS Real Estate graduate from the Class of 2015, said that the Python programming he learnt as an alumnus under Professor Ben Leong helped him build a foundation in server side development, which accelerated his ability to build software programmes at work. With this new knowledge, Caleb developed four different software

applications for his employer's B2B customers in Singapore. Caleb tells us that "if you don't keep learning, you'll be left behind. Constant learning is the only way to maintain an edge."

9. Over the next five years, NUS will re-imagine teaching and learning for the future. We will progressively open up our programmes to those with or without degrees – regardless of alma mater. We will begin with a small number of classes, gradually integrating adult learners into more of our classes, up to 20 per cent of each class. We will customise learning through innovative techniques that include blended classrooms and technology-enhanced learning. Our undergraduates and graduates, as well as our adult learners, will grow as they learn from their professors, and one another, over the course of their careers.

10. To our students, we say that NUS is committed to helping you grow as a person. NUS will be here for you, for life. In your career, we will be your anchor for lifelong learning so that you can make sense of the future economy, and your future jobs. We aim to empower you so that you can give back to the community, to help others succeed.

11. Second, to remain at the top of our game, **we will actively pursue and develop up-and-coming talent.** We aim to hire 200 new researchers as a start as we focus on enhancing our pool of talent. We will pursue top international talent in priority areas as well as new and exciting research areas such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and fintech. We will also offer high potential Singaporean undergraduates fully-funded, bond-free opportunities to pursue their PhDs at NUS.

12. These 200 new hires will help shape the future of NUS, working alongside our current faculty. Senior Deputy President and Provost, Professor Ho Teck Hua, is one of the world's leading behavioural scientists and Singapore's AI chief. He will work with our professors to develop new peaks of excellence at NUS, in research areas that include health innovation and Smart Nation. Our fresh talent will broaden and deepen our renowned community of researchers at NUS.

13. Third, to shorten the time it takes to bring our research discoveries to industry, NUS will ramp up research translation, and enterprise activities. Over the next five years, **we will invest to sharpen our start-up edge. NUS will build new start-up nodes globally including in cities in Southeast Asia.** These nodes could comprise research-based start-ups, or social enterprises, and will involve entrepreneurially-inclined researchers, post-docs, students, and alumni. In Southeast Asia, we will work with leading partner universities and companies to create opportunities for our community and theirs to work together on ideas and solutions that would potentially impact more than 625 million lives.

14. Almost 113 years ago, Tan Jiak Kim and a group of local businessmen provided the seed funding for a start-up medical school, the genesis of the National University of Singapore. Today, more than a century later, in this first week of the new year, we begin again: by making a lifelong commitment of learning to our students; by pursuing and nurturing top research talent, to broaden and deepen an already outstanding community; and by ramping up our efforts in research translation and enterprise.

15. Ladies and Gentlemen, my colleagues and I aim to take NUS to even greater heights than ever before, beyond its strong standing as a leading university. We ask for your support, encouragement, and enthusiasm as we work together to transform NUS into a truly great university, to be among the very best in the world. Please join me in a toast to this very special university, and also to the people who make it so: our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends. To NUS!

16. Thank you very much.