

Be patient, humble when choosing job: Industry experts advise NUS Business School graduates



Mr Loh Chin Hua, CEO and Director, Keppel Corporation Limited and Guest speaker addressing graduates and guests at the commencement ceremony. PHOTO: NUS BUSINESS SCHOOL

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SINGAPORE - In your career choices, do not be too hung up over titles or pay. Instead be curious, be humble and learn.

This was the advice given to the graduating batch of NUS Business School students at the commencement ceremony on Tuesday.

Approximately 1100 Doctorate, Masters and Bachelor graduates from the faculty, together with the School of Design and Environment, donned their gowns and collected their scrolls in two ceremonies.

This year, NUS Business School celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Mr Loh Chin Hua, chief executive officer of Keppel Corporation, guest speaker for the first ceremony, advised the graduating class to never lose their values.

He shared about his life's journey from the kampong in Bukit Arang in Hougang, to the office of chief executive officer in Keppel.

"My advice to you is to know what values resonate with you, then join an organisation which embraces those same values. These values will firmly anchor you and your team members to do the right things, and not just doing things right," he said.

Mr Loh also urged graduates to be humble and willing to learn from people who are not just supervisors and seniors, but juniors too. He added that they should be prepared to accept change, and not be discouraged by crises.

"Embrace the opportunity to thinking unboxed, new approaches to doing business, new processes and new forms of collaboration," he said.

The second ceremony's guest speaker Ms Chua Sock Koong, group chief executive officer of Singtel, dished out advice on starting out in the workforce.

"I know a lot of young people make career decisions based largely on pay. Some universities even have ads featuring how much their respective graduates make," she said.

Ms Chua stressed that money should not be everything, and fresh graduates should look at career options that provide opportunities to learn and grow.

She also urged them to never be complacent, and to take risks. And when they do, they must be prepared to fail.

"We have a saying at Singtel - 'Fail fast, fail cheap'. We want our people to innovate, but if things don't work out, we learn from our mistakes and try again. If you are open to failure, you are open to opportunity. The risk-reward payoff can be tremendous," said Ms Chua.

She said what she looks for in employees is a hunger to learn, the courage to take on challenges, and people who are teamplayers.

"You need to be passionate about what you are doing to last the course and deliver your best. How do you identify your passion? If you feel excited and motivated to get to work everyday, just as I have over the last 25 years, that's a true test," she added.

Sitting among the applauding audience was Mr Ong Zhe Han, 26, who welcomed the advice from the speakers. Mr Ong, graduating with first class honours for both Bachelor of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Engineering (Chemical Engineering), also added that his generation needs patience, and to "stop in the moment" to appreciate it sometimes.

"Instead of taking a short-term view and as Ms Chua said, to job hop for a few hundred dollars, we should put our heads down and do the best we can," said Mr Ong, who was one of two valedictorians for the second ceremony, "Always look forward and don't be impulsive."

Fellow student and one of the two valedictorians for the first ceremony Mr Kevin Yap, 25, agreed with the speakers' observations.

"One problem my peers face in the finance industry is the inability to find, not a job, but their ideal job. Actually in Singapore there's always a job for you, it's just whether or not you want it," said Mr Yap, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Real Estate) and Bachelor of Business Administration.